Diane - with love from Rae Kee
Jan 1950

THE PROMENADE TICKET

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A LAY RECORD OF CONCERT-GOING

BY

A. H. SIDGWICK

AUTHOR OF 'WALKING ESSAYS'

NEW EDITION

LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD & CO.

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FIRST PUBLISHED 1914
REPRINTED 1921 1928, 1936,
1943, AND 1945.

PRINTED BY THE REPLIKA PROCESS
IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
LUND HUMPHRIES
LONDON BRADFORD

TO COLIN TAYLOR

. . . ἐμνήσθην δ' ὁσσάκις ἀμφότεροι
Ἥλιον ἐν λέσχῃ κατεδύσαμεν . . .

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THE PROMENADE TICKET

PROLOGUE

I. From George F. Clarke, Esq., of Fifehead Minster, Dorset, to his nephew Nigel F. Clarke.

28th July.

My dear Nigel,

I am sorry to hear that you will only get such a short holiday this year—I had hoped to see you here. But with only a fortnight you are wise to go north.

Your mention of the Promenade Concerts emboldens me to make a proposition to you, which has been in my mind for some time. I am an old Promenader myself, and, now that I am laid on the shelf, I still remain enormously interested in the subject, and I want to know what you young fellows make of it all, and how much of a fossil I am. The musical criticisms I read don't help me at all:

they mainly talk about the new works and take the classics as read. Now it is just the classics I want to hear about—Bach and Beethoven and Schumann and Brahms and Wagner and the rest. I am old enough to remember 'booms' in all of them, and 'slumps' in a good many, and I want to know the result of it all, not among the professed experts, but among the normal decently intelligent public, among whom (if you don't mind my saying so) I reckon you. This public's views never get recorded: and I think it is a pity.

Will you be my interpreter? What I should like is a perfectly frank and free record of your impressions at a series of concerts, written, if possible, while your memory is fresh, and just putting down what occurs to you. The Promenades are just the thing for my purpose, as they cover the ground well, and include most of the things we argued about in my day.

On my part, I propose to supply you with a season ticket for this year's concerts.

Will you think it over and let me know? It would really be a great kindness on your part to keep an old stager posted about the things he can no longer take part in himself; it would cheer me on my shelf to get news

from the arena down below. And I think it might interest you, and possibly help to while away the dead times in August and September.

Your affectionate uncle,

GEORGE F. CLARKE.

II. From Nigel F. Clarke to his Uncle.

August 4th.

DEAR UNCLE GEORGE,

It is very good of you to offer me the Promenade Ticket, and as far as I am concerned, I would accept your proposal gladly. But I am no earthly good at this sort of game: I can't play, and know very little about music, and absolutely nothing about the technical side. Another thing is that I shall be away some of the time, and even when in town I couldn't undertake to go to the concert every night, and write an account of it. So the ticket would be rather wasted, and you wouldn't get your money's worth out of me.

I could of course pass the ticket on to other people occasionally—Rhoda will be in town some of the time, and would probably like a concert now and then, and so would some of my friends. Only then you wouldn't get your *quid pro quo*,

unless I made whoever had the ticket for the evening write an account of it, in which case you would get a pretty mixed lot of opinions.

So on the whole I really think I ought to refuse, though I am very grateful for the offer.

Yours ever,

N. F. CLARKE.

III. From George F. Clarke to his Nephew.

August 9th.

MY DEAR NIGEL,

Here is the ticket. I quite appreciate your scruples, but am prepared to override them. Your suggestion of a mixed lot of opinions is an excellent one, so please act upon it. Use the ticket yourself when you can and feel inclined, and write your record; at other times give it away to your friends—certainly include Rhoda—and try and get some kind of a written record out of the recipient.

Never mind about lack of musical knowledge; all I want is frank opinions, the cruder the better.

Your affectionate uncle,

GEORGE F. CLARKE.

IV. From Nigel F. Clarke to his Uncle.

August 10.

DEAR UNCLE GEORGE,

Thank you so much; it is awfully good of you. I will do my best, but I warn you that my efforts at musical criticism will be pretty fair drivel.

I'm just off for the week-end, so please excuse this brief scrawl.

Yours ever,

NIGEL F. CLARKE.

V. From Nigel F. Clarke to his Uncle [with a Parcel].

28th October.

DEAR UNCLE GEORGE,

Here is the complete record; you told me to wait till it was all in before sending it to you. On looking through my part of it I feel it is most awful stuff, and I already disagree with most of it. I am afraid you have made a bad bargain, and we have all had a very good time at your expense, and given you very little for it! But I hope you will excuse our shortcomings.

Yours ever,

NIGEL F. CLARKE.

VI. From George F. Clarke to his Nephew [with a Parcel].

16th November.

My dear Nigel,

Your manuscript is exactly what I wanted, and I read it with the greatest interest. Would you thank all your friends who have contributed?

And will you at the same time ask if they have any objection to my publishing it? And will you tell me if you have any yourself?

Do not argue with me, or express views, but say Yes or No. I return a copy of the manuscript in case any of you wish to see it again.

Your stern uncle,
George F. Clarke.

VII. From Nigel F. Clarke to his Uncle.

Nov. 17th.

Dear Uncle George,

What a lark! I will let you know shortly.

In haste,
N. F. C.

VIII. Document addressed to George F. Clarke [with a Parcel].

15th February.

We, the undersigned, having read through the enclosed manuscript, hereby state that we have no objection to its publication.

At the same time we desire emphatically to repudiate any responsibility for the opinions expressed by ourselves and each other.

(Signed) Rhoda G. R. Wharton.
Delia Crauford-Wright.
Nigel F. Clarke.
S. Roberts.
J. R. Harrison.
R. Thos. Lane.
H. N. Malins.[1]

[1] Subject to a protest against the grammar of clause 2.

THE DIARY

THE DIARY

[*N.B.*—The entries not signed or initialled are by Nigel F. Clarke.]

Saturday, August 18th.

It is good to be back at the Promenades again —to see the same old notice asking us to refrain from STRIKING MATCHES (this is all that is visible), the same old fountain in the middle, which will be removed when London fills up towards the time of the Pastoral Symphony, and the same old band of enthusiasts having the first hole punched in their season tickets. The young man with the wild hair and the large score under his arm is here again, and the swan-necked Adonis with his three dowdy adorers, and the hard-favoured solitary in a bowler hat who never moves a muscle and never misses a concert. I cannot find the ecstatic couple who clutch each other at the entrance of their favourite themes, but no doubt they are at the seaside, and will return before long. The familiar faces gather ;

the programmes crackle; the smoke ascends in a blue cloud; we are ready to begin.

The conductor enters amid loud applause, lifts high his baton, and plunges into an amiable little eighteenth-century tune, harmonised with the utmost simplicity. It is absurd to criticise the National Anthem; the fact that generations of our countrymen have thrilled to it is enough. One might as well criticise the Union Jack for not being æsthetically beautiful. Anyhow, all feelings of criticism at this moment are drowned in the pure sensuous enjoyment of hearing an orchestra once more. After the desolation of midsummer, relieved only by the occasional tinkle of a piano or the vibrations of the human voice, it is good to hear again the great body of orchestral sound, built upon strings, fortified by horns and wood-wind, and crowned with the glory of trumpets and trombones. There is not much subtlety in the orchestration of the National Anthem; but it is a fair field and no favour for all the instruments, and makes an inspiriting beginning to their ten weeks of activity.

After this we get to business. A short pause, and a terrific unison on the note of F leads in the 'Egmont' overture. It is early to

begin the use of superlatives ; but one may at least ask rhetorically, Where will you find a better overture than this ? It is simple, straightforward, and uniformly effective ; a trifle theatrical, perhaps, but was it not written for the theatre ? It quickens the pulse, tightens up the heart, and lifts the imagination on to the level of heroic classical drama. The Beethoven devotees are not in a majority to-night, but enough are present to stir the audience into collective feeling ; and well before the end comes that electrical moment, the peculiar property of the Promenades, when the music gets over the footlights and the audience are fused in a massive solidarity of appreciation. We thrill together as the soft cadence of the wood-wind melts into the skirl of the fiddles, and the arrival of the final, triumphant, dæmonic theme on the violas and 'cellos finds us as one man, exulting.

It is characteristic that after this we enjoy almost more an aria from a long and deservedly dead opera, and the Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana* which follows. I wonder how many of us (like myself) learnt the term 'intermezzo' first from this composition, thought it a special title sanctified by its use in this connection, and

only realised with a shock in later years that nearly everybody has written at least one Intermezzo, and that it is the same word as (shall we say ?) the Intermediate Arts Examination. I still find it difficult to remember that the Intermezzo was not composed specially for barrel-organs, but was really conceived as an interlude between the religious rejoicings which always begin an Italian opera, and the double murder and suicide which generally end it.

After watching another operatic singer expire in great agony, it is a relief to turn to the Peer Gynt suite and hear the wood-wind saluting the dawn. It is much too sweet and pleasant a song for that highly sophisticated and unrestful Fourth Act, and suggests a nicer and more primitive Peer Gynt than the hero of Ibsen. In the same way, Aase's Death is a simple lamentation, with no hint of Soria Moria castle, or Granë the steed, or the quick shifts of humour, half-heartedness, and childish recollection which go to make up this wonderful scene. And Anitra's dance and the trolls are mere fun. But surely Grieg was right : and Ibsen was merely mauling an ancient and honourable story in order to make us doubt whether we ought ever to have been born.

And so we pass finally, completing the round of Europe, to Russia and 1812. It is Saturday night, and there are no superior persons about, so we can enjoy it thoroughly without æsthetic qualms. Anyhow, it is a good lesson in history and morals to see 1812 from the other side. It was not all Meissonier and the long-drawn agony of retreat: there was also the thunder of guns and the clash of bells to welcome the victors. Of course it is a thoroughly vulgar noise, calculated to appeal to low tastes, and so forth: but personally I mistrust the musician who cannot make a noise occasionally, just as I mistrust the poet who never uses rodomontade.

Anyhow, even superior persons could hardly deny that we have had a good shilling's worth.

Monday, August 20th.

MY DEAR NIGEL,

Thanks for the ticket. What an odd crew —both audience and performers! I got rather mixed up, as I lost my programme, but I am pretty certain I heard some things I had heard before. There was one thing which you used to whistle when we were waiting to start in the second Torpid: it goes rather slow,

and begins on the wooden things that bleat—not the flute, but the things you blow straight into—rather like a harmonium ; then there is a very odd, quick tune among the fiddles on the right, and after that a general pandemonium which lifts the roof. A man I talked to a bit went into raptures over a thing called *Tristan*, I think—very quiet and then working up ; it seemed to me a bit out of tune in parts. Then there were some very loud things on the long trumpets, and two singers who got nearly black in the face, trying to shout down the band.

In the interval I went out and got some beer and watched the freaks. They are priceless ! There were a few nuts, with cigars ; but mostly they were pale-haired perishers in pince-nez, with no chins, who leant up against each other in rapture whenever the band were more excited than usual. A lot of them went away before the second part, but I stayed and heard a very jolly song called ' Stand Ho ! ' supposed to be sung by a highwayman. I shall tell Bill to get it.

The man with the drum was top-hole, doing some pretty trick-work with the wrists, and a lot of very quick waggles with both sticks like a bee buzzing. Now and then he fairly let

fly, like the Salvation Army man in the story outside Balliol. He had a lot of little taps round the side and kept turning them on and off as if he was doing it for a bet against time. Is it to let the air out, or is it simply a game to keep him amused when he hasn't got to chip in? And who arranges his part? Does the composer fix exactly the number of whacks he is to give, or does he simply leave general directions: 'Sit tight for a bit here and turn off the taps, and then let her have ten good ones'? I should like to play the drum.

Well, many thanks: it was a great lark, though I'm afraid most of it was rather over my head. I didn't leave a cheque-book in your rooms the other night, did I? I seem to have lost it somewhere.

Yours ever,

J. R. HARRISON.

Tuesday, August 21st.

DEAR SIR,

I return herewith with many thanks the ticket, which I greatly enjoyed. The pieces were all very nice, especially one which I have often heard played on piano-organs. I have marked it X on the enclosed programme, which

you might like to see ;[1] a gentleman dropped it by accident from the gallery above and I caught it. The piece I have marked Y was also very fine.[2] . There was one piece by a gentleman who was sitting quite close to where I was sitting, very clever looking, with curly hair ; and at the end they all cheered, and the man on the platform with a stick turned round and bowed to him, and he got up and bowed to the audience. It must be a lot of trouble making up these pieces, and making sure the band will come in right, and all ; I suppose they practise, and see how it sounds best. Some of the things I thought they had not practised so much as some of the others, but I could not say for certain.

Hoping you are well and with many thanks.

Your obt. servant,

2 enclosures. R. Thos. Lane.

Wednesday, August 22nd.

About once every six months I am seized with a desire to hear the Unfinished Symphony. It this is impracticable, the desire can be partly assuaged by the G Minor of Mozart ; failing

[1] Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

[2] Handel's Largo.

this, nothing but violent distraction or work—a revolting alternative—can get rid of it. I do not say that these are the two greatest symphonies in the world, or that Schubert and Mozart are the two greatest composers. But there is something about the Unfinished and the G Minor which no other music possesses; as the man says in Kipling, 'These are the pure Magic. These are the clear Vision. The rest is only poetry.' When the human race stands at the bar on the day of judgment to show justification for its existence, we shall doubtless have a great deal to say; but our best defence will be to send for an orchestra and play, first, the rise of the violins above the theme in the slow movement of the G Minor, and second, the call of the horn just before the reprise in the second movement of the Unfinished, on the octave of E, pianissimo, four times repeated.

Nothing can alter the effect of the Unfinished. I have heard it played by a superb orchestra, by an excellent orchestra, by a moderate orchestra, by an amateur orchestra; under Colonne, under Mengelberg, under Richter, under Steinbach, under Wood (order alphabetical), under an energetic but limited enthusiast, under a gentleman who was evidently making the best of a

bad job. I have heard it with every detail perfect, the strings exquisite and poignant beyond belief, the oboe concentrating in its lament the secular sorrow of humanity. I have heard it with a gross and exasperating exaggeration of the rallentandos. I have heard it with the wood-wind out of tune, and the drum making wild shots at his part and finally abandoning it in despair. But at every hearing the thing itself stands out indubitable, apart from and above any varieties of interpretation.

And what it is, admits of little doubt. However much we may deprecate programmes, and boggle over the verbal interpretation of music, we cannot miss the meaning of this symphony. It is tragedy at its keenest—not the serene and ample tragedy of the Greeks, but the more personal and modern tragedy which springs from actual sorrow and suffering, which moves to no large predestined end, but dashes like a forlorn hope in the face of fate, and reels back broken and despairing. Greek tragedy at its best is the profoundest life of a community made conscious : at its worst, it is a rather dull problem in predestination. Modern tragedy at its worst is pathological delirium : at its best—well, read the third act of King Lear or

listen to the working out in the first movement of the Unfinished Symphony.

There is a phrase of a Shakespeare critic which always comes into my mind at the crisis of this movement. The two beautiful themes for wood-wind and strings, by which most people remember this symphony, are laid aside altogether in the working out—silenced, as it were, by the terrific unison on the key-note of the minor which opens it. We return to the first theme of all—the dim foreboding in the 'cellos and basses on which the symphony begins. It sinks down low on the 'cellos, rises high on the fiddles, quickening its pace as the pain becomes more unbearable. Thrice with increasing passion the strings range down two octaves, from loud to soft, from frenzy to despair : thrice they are interrupted by the sad whisper of the wood-wind in syncopation. And then—it is the supreme moment of the symphony—while we wonder what climax of agony is coming, we return simply to the plain theme with which we started, thundered out in the key of E Minor. As the Shakespeare critic says, 'The last terror confronts us : our dream has come true.'

This is as far as I am prepared to go in the sweet but fallacious game of programme-inter-

pretation. The symphony, after all, is a symphony and not an ordered exposition of the woes of humanity, and if we ever get over-objectifying we are brought up sharp against some purely musical law which breaks the logical order of the interpretation. In this case, after the climax and the terrible hurrying on the strings succeeding it—the mark *fz* in the score always lingers in my mind at this point—we go back by the good first-movement rule to the two other themes, not from any psychological motive, but simply because they have to be repeated. If you expect Schubert's final view on the universe at this point, you will be disappointed : if you are out for music you will not.

At the end of the first movement let me recommend to my fellow-laymen an excellent rule applying to all symphonies, but particularly to this and the G Minor. During the applause at the end, shut your ears and continue to hum furiously to yourself the notes of the tonic chord. You will then get the full effect of the change of key in the slow movement. Musical people can carry the chord in their heads, but unmusical people are apt to forget it, and so miss the electrical moment of the first chord in E Major. I once heard the G Minor played in the proper

way, with only ten seconds between the first and second movements, and the result was that we jumped in our seats with a sudden rapture and hugged ourselves.

As for the rest of the slow movement, it is simply glorious and perfect music, with the supreme inspiration of the horn-call. There is calmness in it, but not the calmness of a happy man ; there is no merging of sorrow in a larger peace, but only the acquiescence that comes with exhaustion. Once more the price is paid which the topmost flights of music demand—the price of a broken life and a tortured imagination. One can only hope that Schubert felt that the price was not paid in vain : that the little spectacled man, who suffered and sorrowed and died young, was glad to lay this supreme tribute of sorrow and suffering at the feet of the gods who loved him.

Thursday, August 23rd.

DEAR NIGEL,

Many thanks for the ticket. Another girl came with me, and we enjoyed the concert very much, though it was rather hot. We had a Haydn symphony—number 97 or so—rather dull, I thought. The lady who sang

wore a most awful dress, which looked as if she had wrapped the bath-room rug round her just before starting. She produced her voice all wrong, and was much applauded.

We both liked the Barcarolle out of *Hoffmann* : I saw the opera the other day. It is rather fun, but a disconnected sort of story. The Barcarolle makes a most splendid waltz, and they played it so well I wanted to dance.

The best thing we heard was the *Parsifal* overture, which was very fine, though awfully solemn. The man next to me said it was by Sullivan—just fancy ! They were also doing Sullivan's ' In Memoriam ' overture, so I suppose he got mixed up. The lady who was with him fainted just afterwards, and he didn't know what to do, so we went out and helped him, and got a cab for her. All the people said ' Sh-h,' which was rather heartless, wasn't it ?

Well, many thanks.

Your aff^te^. cousin,

RHODA G. R. CLARKE.

Friday, 24th August.

The real thing at last. As I went into the hall to-night, I felt at once the genuine, unalloyed, echt-promenadisch atmosphere, which is com-

pounded of 60 per cent. 'Three cheers for Beethoven,' 35 per cent. 'By Jove, this is splendid,' and 5 per cent. 'Aren't we jolly cultivated to be able to enjoy it?' It is a lively and invigorating atmosphere, and forms the final reply to the idiot who tells you that you miss a lot of pleasure by being superior, and not being able to enjoy the Rosary Waltz. I wish some of the soddened waltz-devotees could have seen the rapt faces of the amiable couple (now returned from the seaside) who clutched each other with frenzy at the entry of the quick theme in Leonora No. 3. Their eyes were misty, like those of the waltz-devotees at 2.45 A.M.; but it was the mist of the mountain-tops, not of the marshes.

Personally, I have always felt a curious difficulty in getting hold of 'Leonora.' I do not suppose it is technically difficult in any way; indeed its biggest effects are achieved with absolute simplicity. But there is something about the overture itself—a sort of distance—which makes prolonged acquaintance a necessary condition of intimacy. Even now, when it has been thoroughly dinned into my ears, I find it an effort to keep up with it. The 'Leonora' does not rush at you spontaneously and over-

whelmingly like 'Egmont' and 'Coriolan' and the Mozart overtures (on which be peace).

After this, and a most splendid Bach song, a lively and capable pianist made us happy with the Third Concerto of Beethoven. She was well up to her work, and also young, which is the main thing in this Concerto; no one over forty ought to be allowed to play it. There must be no sophistication, no searching for hidden meanings, no intensity or nuance or Ahnung or whatever the proper word is; the whole thing must go straight ahead and enjoy itself like youth. For every one concerned is happy; Beethoven himself, having just finished the Second Symphony; the pianist and the audience, very naturally; and happiest of all perhaps is the piano, which has not got to fight for its life as in the 4th and 5th Concertos, but can dominate the orchestra with ease, and has only to sparkle and gambol and trill and cut out the clean and supple phrases—all the things that a piano is conspicuously fitted to do. So when my kind friends tell me that the C Minor Concerto is imitative and immature, titivated Mozart-and-water, and so forth, I simply say, Go to: it is a friend to mirth and an enemy

to all sluggishness and inertia: therefore I will continue to wallow in it.

There followed a most glorious Bach suite. Heaven knows from whence it was collected—I believe from several different organ-pieces; but with Bach this sort of thing hardly matters. It you took a chorale from a mass, a violin solo, and a movement for wind-instruments, and put them together arranged for the barrel-organ, the result would still be impressive. The finest thing in this suite was written for the organ—a most noble and moving song for the wood-wind over a slow accompaniment, stalking sombrely through every mood of grandeur and solemnity.

After this and the Concerto, the First Symphony, to speak quite honestly, fell a trifle flat. Of course it is the first of the nine, contains many interesting anticipations of the later style, starts on a discord, emphasises the drums, has the beginnings of a scherzo, etc., etc.; but personally I prefer performance to promise. Aristotle makes a penetrating remark in the *Ethics*, which somebody ought to have shown to Froebel, when he points out that children cannot be 'happy' in the sense of achieving the highest human good. 'They are not yet

capable of this sort of thing. Those who are called so' (*i.e.* by Froebel, Wordsworth, and teknolaters generally) 'are simply congratulated on account of their promise.' I am inclined to let the First Symphony go at that, and leave it to the lovers of origins, who abound in these days, to sing its praises.

Saturday, 25th August.

There is one very good rule which all concert-goers should observe. It is, Talk to your friends freely and genially before you enter the hall and after you leave it; continue your remarks, if you will, between the items of the programme; but from the moment when the conductor taps the desk before starting until one second after the last note has ceased to sound, *in no circumstances say anything.*

There is nothing finer than friendship, nothing more beautiful and useful than family affection, nothing more poetical than the love of the sexes; and all these elevated feelings are naturally expressed in conversation. But there is just one period during which such expression is undesirable; and that is the period from the moment when the conductor taps his desk before starting until one second after the last note has ceased to sound.

For those solitary beings who have neither friend nor kin nor spouse to come with them to concerts, it is a pleasure to overhear the confidences of others ; but they much prefer to discontinue this pleasure at the moment when the conductor taps his desk before starting, and to resume it one second after the last note has ceased to sound.

The occasion of these remarks was the *Tristan* Prelude and Liebestod, which we were allowed to have, albeit on a Saturday night, as a reward for being good. The rule applies with special force to this composition. The *Tristan* Prelude emphatically does not begin with its first note : it begins with a dead silence of five-sixths of a bar, the blankness and isolation out of which rises the yearning Tristan. If Wagner had intended this silence to be filled with giggles and whispers, he would have put it in the score, thus :—

Eine Stimme.

6	Oh, now, stop it, silly, can't you ?	Don't you hear, etc.
8		

As he did not, I infer that he meant complete silence to be observed.

The second part of the rule is equally important. At the very end of the Liebestod, when the storm and agony have died down, when the tortured harmonies have resolved themselves in the soft sweeps of the harps, and you really think it is all over at last, Wagner has one more effect in store—a hint, no more than a hint, on the wood-wind, faint but unmistakable, of the chords with which the Prelude opens ; and you are left with the suggestion that there is no real solution, and that even in eternity the yearning of Tristan was not stilled. At such a moment you do not want to hear a voice saying, 'Oh, gracious, what's the time?'

It is rather ungrateful to make this criticism. Promenade audiences as a rule are particularly good—the best in London. They give you the real collective feeling of appreciation, which sweeps you off your feet and makes you one with your fellow-listeners. It is a cyclonic movement, natural to an island race ; and must be carefully distinguished from the staid and anticyclonic calm which you can get at particularly refined and select Brahms recitals, resulting from a uniform high pressure of moral principle. There you feel that the silence is mainly due to intellectual detachment, good

manners, and perhaps some natural reaction from the excessive amount of conversation which the Higher Life demands. But at the Promenades you get the real silence of rapt appreciation, the single heart-beat of an audience at one with itself. Hence any interruption is peculiarly exasperating. It is not the mere sound: the rumble of traffic outside or the patter of rain on the roof is hardly noticed. It is the sudden distraction of attention, the suggestion of alien interests and preoccupations, the sin against the solidarity of a fine audience listening to fine music.

No doubt this puts the standard high, particularly in England, where the long and discreditable tradition of the Opera gives us all a glaring example of how not to listen to music. Since Wagner became fashionable, this particular form of vulgarity has been on the decline: but one still finds at concerts as a general rule that large hats and jewellery mean chatter: and the proper tradition of listening has been built up by the middle classes mainly for themselves. It is only because, as a member of these classes, I am jealous of the purity of this tradition, that I make these remarks, and insist on my natural, inalienable right to be

peevish when some one giggles in the *Tristan* Prelude.

For the rest, Saturday night was much as usual. Tschaikowsky's 'Casse Noisette' suite is good fun, and the Schumann 'Traümerei' is always a joy. The chief enthusiasm was reserved for some misapplications of the human voice, and for selections from *Carmen*—lively, capable, and 'slick,' as the artists say, but—poor old Nietzsche!

Monday, 27th August.

My dear Nigel,

I must thank you once more for a Wagner concert. As a matter of fact I was very glad to go again: some of the tunes had been running in my head, and I wanted to hear some more. I was talking to a friend of mine about it after the concert last week, who was rather well up in it all and told me some things about W. himself which were jolly interesting. He must have been a lively card! But he got more serious as he grew older, my friend said, and ended up with a thing—I have forgotten its name but could find out—which is practically religious, and used to be forbidden in this country.

My friend also told me to look out for a thing called the *Flying Dutchman*, which has a curse theme in it which may be either major or minor. I didn't understand what she meant at the time, but didn't let on : and when I got home I asked Bill about it, who said that major was when you go straight up the white notes starting from C, and minor was when you do the same taking in some of the black notes—the two top ones and the second from the bottom. If you hit C, E, and G together you get the major chord : but if you hit the black note next to E on the left (E flat) instead of E itself you get the minor chord. This is what Wordsworth meant about not a fourth, but a star, Bill said.

Well, funnily enough, we had the *Flying Dutchman* overture to-night, and I listened for the Curse theme. I tried it on Bill's piano afterwards, and found it was simply low G, two C's, quick low G, two C's, the second one quick, and high G rather long. So you see you have the notes which are common to the major and minor chords, but by *not putting in* the note which settles which it is—*i.e.* white or black—Wagner left it quite uncertain which it was in and if you whistle it you can think

of it either way. It seems an awfully clever idea : I must talk to my friend about it some more.

There is an awfully fine rushing sound in the *Flying Dutchman*, suggesting a storm and wind ; it is all about the sea, you know. I used to think the Flying Dutchman was the name of an engine on the Great Western ; but it is really a much older story—about a man who had a Curse on him (what I was speaking about above) and had to wander over the sea, only coming ashore at stated intervals, until he found a woman to redeem him. There is some other story rather like it, but I can't remember exactly.

There was a lot more very fine stuff—rather hard work, but I suppose one gets used to it. It is certainly jolly exciting. I think Wagner is my favourite composer, and the *Fl. D.* his best work. Can you lend me any book about music explaining things generally ? I shall be seeing some people soon who are frightfully musical, and don't want to make an ass of myself more than usual.

Yours v. truly,

J. R. HARRISON.

Tuesday, 28th August.

We have had a feast of young composers to-night—clever, interesting, obviously out for big game and obviously quite sincere, but rather hard work for the layman. They assume as commonplaces the things we are gradually struggling towards, and start from a point several miles ahead of the farthest we can see. We must not complain ; it is their business to do their best, and we have no earthly right to demand that they shall accommodate themselves to our shortcomings. At any rate, they have cut loose once and for all from the easy and eupeptic sentimentality which devastated English music in the nineteenth century—the awful offspring of the generations which battened on sacred music, and drank deep of slush-and-water in the shape of the *Ancient and Modern Hymns*. Even when in the excitement of the moment a young composer puts eleven of the notes of the chromatic scale into a single chord, it is at any rate a relief to feel that he is emphasising his hostility to the civilisation which produced Hymn Number 223.

I fell in with Henry at the concert, and we afterwards forgathered with Rhoda and a red-haired friend of hers, who had been up above.

I missed the friend's name, and as Rhoda addressed her only as 'Fluffy' I am left with the supposition that she is named Flavia. We all went to the shop down the street for cakes and lemonade, and considerable temper was displayed over the modern composers. Henry defends them all whole-heartedly; Rhoda thinks that music ended when Brahms died (she said 'in 1893,' which was the year of Tschaikowsky's death, so that there was trouble at the outset); Flavia is a folk-song expert, awaits a national folk-school of music, and sees modal influences in places where the young composers only meant to defy the academics. I being a layman among experts bluffed when I could, kept silent when I could not, and paid for the cakes.

Rhoda led off viciously on the subject of euphony; the young composers simply make a noise, and think it good because it is novel. Henry replied that there were plenty of things in Beethoven as cacophonous as the modernest modern—some chords in the 'Eroica' and the C sharp in the finale of the Eighth Symphony. He said the rules of harmony were obsolete, and that it merely needed training to appreciate the young composers. I brought up the classic anti-obscurantist precedent of Wagner, whereat

Henry grew peevish, as he thinks Wagner rather a bore at times. Flavia then sailed in with modes, and said that chords which sounded strange were really all right if based on the Mixo-Lydian scale, or words to that effect. So we got on to the subject of folk-song ; Rhoda backed it as good and genuine music, refreshing to a blasé and sophisticated age, and so forth ; Henry said that about a quarter of the tunes were good and the rest rather dull, and that Schubert could have written—indeed did write —three or four folk-songs, much better and much folkier than anything collected from embarrassed rustics, before getting up in the morning. Amid the clamour which ensued I tried a variant of Chesterton's argument about Paganism and Christianity—that humanity, having all the modes to choose from, had chosen two as being obviously the best, namely, the major and minor. Henry then got loose on the subject of orchestration, about which he knew much more than any of us ; so that when he said that the young composers were all remarkably good orchestrators, we could not say him nay. Unluckily he let fall the remark that Brahms was the fourteenth best orchestrator of the nineteenth century, and began enumerating

the thirteen, leading off with Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner, and Tschaikowsky. Rhoda instantly fell upon him, and all that Flavia and I could do above the uproar was to disagree spasmodically about programme music.

A pleasant and talkative evening. I see where the modern composers get their structural principles for tone-poems—from current discussions on music.

Wednesday, 29th August.

I am in the throes of packing-up, and am turning over the season ticket for a fortnight to Harrison, who seems seriously taken with the Promenade fever. All I have time to do to-night is to record one final conviction that Mozart was the supreme musician. After all our argumentation of last night—after all the fat talk about tonality and instrumentation and modes and atmosphere and thematic development—here are two little pieces of Mozart which antiquate the whole controversy, and send us back to the first principle of judgment—this is good, and the rest is stuff.

The first was the *Magic Flute* overture. The opening chords always remind me of some stodgy Handel march—is it the March of the

Priests? But after that comes a little elvish run on the fiddles, a premonition of what is ahead, which Handel would never have dreamt of, and then the first theme rushes away into fairyland, whither it is given to very few to follow.

The other was the 39th Symphony in E flat. I know—that is, I shall remember in some calmer moment—that this is not the best symphony in the world, nor even the best which Mozart ever wrote. But at present I can think of nothing but the enrapturing Minuet and Trio, the chuckle of the strings running up the chord of A flat, the graceful little codetta, the trio with its slight hint of anxiety towards the end, returning at once to the air and fire of the Minuet. The whole thing only takes four pages of the score, but for these four I would joyfully sacrifice—let me not say what, lest I should be sorry for it in the morning.

So let Henry with his atmosphere, and Rhoda with her Brahms, and Flavia with her modes take note that here is the ultimate point to which their canons must accommodate themselves. This is good; and unless their canons prove it to be so, so much the worse for them. In the name of the categorical imperative of æsthetic

judgment (= I think so), I renounce their friendship unless they agree with me.

The taxi waits and I must flee.

Thursday, 30th August.

MY DEAR NIGEL,

It was awfully good of you to let me have the ticket, which I assure you I will use. I will keep notes, as you say your uncle wants them, but I expect they will make him a bit tired, don't you know?

The only piece of Wagner we had to-night was the Prelude to *Lohengrin*—very fine, but I don't like it as much as the *Flying Dutchman*.

There was a thing I rather liked—the *Ruy Blas* overture of Mendelssohn. Isn't he supposed to be a bit below par nowadays? But I must say I liked it. There is a topping tune which is done first jerkily and then more smoothly by the big fiddles which stand up but the man sits down—not the biggest of all where he stands up—and some of the flute things you blow down into through a pipe, not across. I wish you would tell me their names. The tune rather reminded me of an old thing Bill used to play about ten years ago—'Kitty's not built that way' I think it was.

Some of the instruments got rather out of tune, I think, in one thing, by a man called Debussy. At least it sounded very odd in parts.

A man who looked rather Welsh sang the Prologue to *Pagliacci*. This is a very clever idea. I was told about it by a friend of mine. It is an opera, and instead of the ordinary overture by the band only (like *Lohengrin*), a man—an actor, that is—comes out in front of the curtain, and sings, so to speak, not in the play, a song explaining that the play is about real life and not the usual tomfoolery, or words to that effect. Then he goes back into the play and takes a part : and in the play there is another play, like Hamlet, in which the man who makes love to the manager's wife is really making love to her in the main play, and the manager who has to act the jealous husband in the other play is really jealous all the time (*i.e.* in the play), and when he has to stab the other man in the play, really does so in the play actually on the stage—of course he doesn't really—and the play comes to an end. The prologue is very fine, and has some odd chords which reminded me of Wagner. The audience got terrifically excited, and simply sweated blood.

To-morrow we have the Second Symphony

of Beethoven, which I have been reading about in the book you lent me. The thing to look out for is evidently a bit near the end. 'Earth is forgotten and we are in Heaven,' the book says : so I shall expect something with a plus handicap there.

I hope you are having a good time. If you find a watch anywhere by the stream between Sail and Grassmoor, it is probably mine. I must have dropped it while I was bathing.

Yours v. truly,

J. R. HARRISON.

Friday, 31st August.

Topping concert. I spotted the bit near the end all right : it all pulls up with a jerk, and then the low part begins going down and the high part begins going up, till it all ends in a kind of shimmering with the fiddles sawing very quick and quite soft—simply ripping. The second movement was also top-hole (*i.e.* the one after the first pause—there is an introduction before the first movement, but it goes straight on) : it begins, dum, dum, dum, dum, quite quiet : then dum dumti-dumti-dumti, getting a bit of a move on ; then dum-diddle-iddle-um-tum-tum ; dum-diddle-iddle-um-tum-tum ;

dum - diddle - iddle - umti - dumti - dumti - dum. Overture Leonora No. 2 ; a bit stiff. Song 'Adelaida' by a tow-haired don't push-me-or-I-shall-fall-over, who waggled his head and shut his eyes and let fly at the right-hand top gallery ; very popular with females.

Met some friends afterwards and argued about Wagner. (Mem : Ask Bill what the Ring is. Is it a song ?)

J. R. H.

Saturday, 1st September.

Rather cheap, but enjoyed it. Rotten taste I suppose. More *Pagliacci* : very passionate : 'Such a game, belie-ve me, frie-e-e-ends, is hardly worth the play-ing.' Thought *Faust* was by Gounod, author of 'Nazareth,' which my uncle used to sing in his bath ; but apparently it was by a man called Berlioz. (Is this pronounced Barely-owe or Barely-owes ? These French surnames are corkers, especially Saint Saëns, which I have heard pronounced Song-Song, Sang-song, and Sang-Sayong). Anyhow, the stuff was jolly exciting, especially a march, with no end of a noise on the long adjustable trumpets.

Awfully jolly overture to *William Tell*—

not serious like the *Flying Dutchman*, but one can't expect people to be always serious. I don't know how it fits the apple-shooting story, but I believe W. T. was a patriot generally, so no doubt there were plenty of other stories about him.

Fantasia on Scotch tunes at the end : recognised several. It seems much the same as what restaurant bands call 'Selection,' but I suppose Fantasia is a more high-class word.

J. R. H.

Monday, 3rd September.

Anniversary of the battle of Dunbar. Found out about the Ring—name for four operas which W. wrote, all connected with each other. We had a very fine bit to-night, where a girl is being put to sleep by an old man (like the Sleeping Beauty) on a hill, with magic fire round her. Man had to shout to get through the band, but brought it off. Very pretty thing from the same called 'Forest Murmurs,' where the instruments imitate trees rustling, birds twittering, etc. But ought music to try and *imitate* sounds like that? As a matter of fact if you did it really well you couldn't do it at all, because most birds really sing out of tune mostly. Any-

how I am sure the best people, like Beethoven, would never have tried to *imitate* bird-noises. I suppose it came into fashion in Wagner's time —realism, and all that. I remember a song called 'The Diver,' where the music imitates a man walking along the bottom of the sea to the words 'Walking alone.' But I should have thought generally that what the music ought to have gone for would have been the *general feeling* rather than the *actual noise*.

J. R. H.

Tuesday, September 4th.

Dear Mr. Harrison,

It was so kind of you to let me have the use of your ticket this evening, as I particularly wished to hear the Huntingdonshire Phantasy and the Variations on the 'Unquiet Grave.' The Phantasy sounded a trifle episodic, but probably a second hearing would remove this impression. It is rich in atmosphere, and has some wonderful Æolian colouring. It uses the old song of 'The Fly is on the Turmot' for its main thematic material, flattening the seventh, of course, and interposing the proper $\frac{5}{4}$ bar.

Once last summer I accidentally overheard this song being sung by some men in an inn

when I was cycling : I remember noticing that the leading singer—or at least the loudest singer —appeared to be also flattening the third, and occasionally the fifth as well. Whether this was an accident or some subconscious recollection of an even older mode, I do not know.

The Variations I did not like so much. The tune has always been one of my favourites : it has that certainty—that emotional precision—which one so often finds in folk-song, and indeed in communal expression of all kinds. The individual composer, to my mind, often wanders round the confines of emotion. But folk-song, springing from the collective consciousness of a people, hits the centre of emotion indubitably. There is no doubt that the 'Unquiet Grave' speaks in the very accents of sorrow, of mourning and of elemental fear.

But the treatment of the theme in these Variations is unsatisfactory. Indeed it was hard to recognise the theme at all at times. When one alters the rhythm *and* the melody entirely, and then only uses it for very small portions of the work, one might just as well not call it 'Variations on a theme.'

On turning back to your note, I see that you mention that the ticket is really the property

of Mr. Clarke. I know his cousin Rhoda very well, and met him recently. I hope you will bring him to a better state of mind on the subject of folk-song : at least I trust from what you said the other night that you are a true believer. In all seriousness I think that in folk-song lies the hope for the regeneration of national music : we must return to the spring ! Pray forgive me this sermon, and believe me,

Yours most sincerely,

DELIA WARD.

Wednesday, 5th September.

MY DEAR NIGEL,

I hope you are enjoying your holiday : it is very hot, and I wish I was you. Your friend Mr. Harrison has been very generous with the ticket ; Fluffy had it last night—he is an acquaintance of hers, you know ; and there was some modern music, which suited her very well. By the way, I hope your friend has recovered from the cakes last week, and is in a state of repentance about Brahms.

He ought to have been there to-night. We had the Second Symphony in D, which I think is my favourite, except that I always think that about the one I have heard last. It really

is splendid, especially the second theme in the first movement, and all the end part : it has such a swing about it, and yet is quite restrained, and not at all sensational, like Tschaikowsky ; in fact I believe Brahms keeps pretty strictly to the rules. And if this is so I don't see what it matters about orchestration ; besides, I believe Brahms' orchestration is all right, *really*.

What I always feel is that Brahms is like the really good people—Beethoven and Schumann and Schubert : you can imagine them writing the Brahms symphonies, but you can't imagine them writing the 'Pathétique' Symphony, or the Liszt symphonies, still less Strauss tone-poems. After all, they were gentlemen, and so was Brahms.

There was also, by way of a contrast, the Liszt Piano Concerto in E flat—a nasty, flashy sort of thing, I thought, though the man played it rather well. Do you know the rhyme about Liszt ?

> The Abbé Liszt
> Played the piano with his fist.
> That was the way
> He used to play.

It is by Calverley, I believe. I was rather reminded of it at times to-night. I suppose

your friend would say it was splendid orchestration : but I honestly don't quite see where it comes in.

An old man next to me cried during two of Mendelssohn's Lieder ohne Wörter which they did. I suppose they first came out when he was young. It was funny hearing them on an orchestra. They played the one which Uncle Joe used to say it was the sign of a true woman to be able to appreciate—don't you remember ?

Well, I must stop. Eat a gooseberry pie for me next time you are at Gatesgarth, and with apologies for this long scrawl,

Your aff^te^. cousin,

RHODA G. R. CLARKE.

Thursday, 6th September.

Heard the *Fidelio* overture, which was the one really written for the opera ; not quite so stiff as Leonora No. 2, which was one of the others. A Piano Concerto by a man called Grieg ; I don't think I like it much. A piano seems to me better either alone or going all the time ; if it is simply going in bits, with the orchestra chipping in between whiles, one loses the hang of the thing. There was one bit where every one stopped (including the conductor) and the

man twiddled about as fast as he could all over the piano, without any sort of tune. Personally I don't see the point of this sort of thing.

Very jolly thing called Raff's Cavatina with a good tune to it. Also two singers : woman pretty good, but smirked ; man the limit.

J. R. H.

Friday, 7th September.

DEAR NIGEL,

I thought I would just write to let you know I am going strong with the ticket—only missed two nights owing to having an aunt up, so I gave it once to your cousin and once to a friend of mine whom I find you know—a Miss Ward, who says she had a row with Henry about music, particularly Brahms. I think Henry is quite wrong, you know ; what I have heard of Brahms is awfully good, especially the Brandenburg Concerto. This is much better than a concerto by Grieg, which I heard last night.

But what I really wanted to tell you about was the 'Eroica' Symphony of Beethoven. (It's all right. I haven't dropped the H : this is the proper way to spell it.) It really is a most topping thing. It starts off with a tune which keeps on coming in all through

the first movement—generally in the major but sometimes in the minor. It is quite a simple tune, but very effective. There is an awful noise at one point, representing the struggle between the hero (= the tune) and various calamities, disasters, etc. (= the discords). After this it gets quiet by degrees, and all the other instruments stop except the fiddles, very soft and waggling on two notes which make you think it is all coming to an end. (I think they are the same two notes which the tenors sometimes have in a hymn, just before the last note, while the other parts have only one.) Then the horn suddenly comes in with the original tune, before you are ready for it, so to speak.

By the way, what a topping thing the horn is. I looked it up in that book you lent me, which gave a picture of it, so I recognised it. The book says with the horn (and some other instruments) you don't have to play the notes which are written, but other notes; only they are written like that so that if you are playing different sorts of horns you only have to do the same sort of thing (when the note written is the same) to produce different notes *really*, if you see what I mean. It must be a corker to play.

The second movement is a Funeral March for Napoleon, written before he died; Beethoven was a great admirer of his at the time, but changed his mind later. It is a grand thing. There is a bit for the oboe in the middle (I found that also in your book): it has rather a bleating sound, but I like it. Then the first tune comes back again. Most funeral marches seem to cheer up in the middle and then become gloomy again. I suppose the idea is, (1) the poor old boy's dead; (2) well, after all, he's probably gone to heaven; (3) still, anyhow, the poor old boy's dead. I'm afraid this is rather irreverent, but you see what I mean.

The third movement is quite skittish by way of a relief. The programme talked some hot air about a return to normal human life after a great loss. I thought it awfully jolly; but I suppose it's not really as good as the others, is it?

The fourth movement is a set of Variations. In Variations you take a tune and keep on repeating things very like it but not the same, *e.g.* much quicker or slower, or with a lot of extra notes. Near the end there was one variation much slower, and I thought rather like the

Funeral March, though I can't say why exactly. Bar this, which was awfully fine, I thought the fourth movement was not as good as the first two.

But it really is a splendid thing, and I should like to hear it again.

I say, what does a folk-song mean? I have been hearing a lot about it lately. It can't be a *popular* song, in the ordinary sense of the word; at least, judging from what I have heard, they don't *sound* popular. I couldn't find anything about it in your book.

Yours v. truly,

J. R. HARRISON.

Saturday, 8th September.

Heard the Leonora No. 3 overture; very like No. 2, but if anything stiffer. Very hard to remember afterwards. The main tune starts in rag-time. Rather exciting when a man played a trumpet *off the stage*; great applause when he came in again at the end. A man does the same thing in *Tristan* (by Wagner) only with a thing like an oboe, a bit lower and a bit oilier in tone. At the end the fiddles all go racing up and down with no particular tune.

Very jolly thing called Suite de Ballet by Gluck-Mottl. It went nice and straight ahead. I don't know who Gluck-Mottl was or when he lived, but he was clearly a scholar and a gentleman. It wasn't at all like a ballet nowadays.

Overture and Scherzo (*Midsummer Night's Dream*) by Mendelssohn; simply *ripping*, I thought. If it really is bad form to like Mendelssohn, I must be pretty well out of it, with this and *Ruy Blas*. Perhaps it is partly because I knew the M. N. D. music before, having heard it on the stage. It seems to me just exactly right—fairies, and Bottom, and the jolly tune at the end, which suggests fine young men and women, heroes, and Amazons and so forth, marching off to be married. It just suits the play.

And it seems to me that imitating the donkey-noise is all right, *as a joke*, which it is not in the case of Wagner and the birds. I argued with Bill about it afterwards; he said all music was really like things, *e.g.* the fairy part was like the fairies, just as the donkey part was like the donkey. But he couldn't see that although the tune may *suggest* fairies, it isn't like the actual noise fairies make (or would make

if there were any), any more than the tune in the 'Eroica' Symphony is like the noise a hero would actually make. Bill didn't know anything about this, so I had him.

J. R. H.

Monday, 10th September.

Heard Senta's Ballad from the *Flying Dutchman*; it has two of the same tunes which come into the overture. This dodge of making your overture out of tunes which you are going to use later for songs is also used by Sullivan (*e.g.* in *Iolanthe*), but his overtures are rather different from Wagner's. Senta's Ballad is very good, but not quite a song in the ordinary sense —*i.e.* not the sort of thing you whistle to yourself, or if you do you don't whistle it all. Wagner is generally rather hard to whistle, as you want the accompaniment: also the tunes are very short, and have a way of branching off into something else. I suppose the difference is that in a song (*e.g.* 'The Girl I left Behind Me') you are thinking more or less about the same thing the whole time: whereas in operas, the moment you start thinking about something, something else crops up, or several other things at once. It seems to be rather the same sort

of thing in symphonies, as far as I have gone.

We also had several bits from the *Meistersinger*, which I did not know before—except the Preislied, which a man used to play as a fiddle solo in a restaurant I used to go to in Germany. It is a jolly tune, and comes in very well in the overture, with a change of key and some fine waggles on the orchestra leading to it—dum, dum, dum, diddledi dumdi, dum, dum.

I do not like the Venusberg music from *Tannhäuser* very much : it is too noisy, and sounds as if everybody concerned was drunk. The Pilgrims' March is not only (a) more dignified, but also (b) prettier ; and I take it W.'s object was to make the Venusberg part more *attractive* while the other part was only more *moral*. If so, it is rather a mis-fire. There is a bit near the end of the Venusberg music very like a bit in the Intermezzo which is played on barrel-organs : I don't know who bagged it from which or whether it was an accident like 'Oh, Who will o'er the Downs so Free' and 'The Church's One Foundation.'

J. R. H.

Tuesday, 11th September.

DEAR MR. HARRISON,

I return the ticket with many thanks. We seem to be making a good thing out of Nigel's holiday!

The Concert Piece for Small Orchestra was supposed to be the great attraction, but I did not care about it much. It doesn't get anywhere, or say anything, and you feel at any moment that you might just as well be starting all over again—only you're glad you're not! And I don't see how it makes it much better to have four horns and a bass tuba and cymbals played with a drumstick—in a small orchestra, too!

But I enjoyed some of the other things tremendously—especially the *Rosamunde* Ballet Music. Isn't it funny what a lot of good music was written for rotten plays?

The *Euryanthe* overture I don't care so much about, but I dare say the orchestration is very wonderful, as Nigel's friend said the other night.

There was rather a good singer (high tenor), but he looked as if he wanted something to eat.

Yours very truly,

RHODA G. CLARKE.

Wednesday, 12th September.

Heard Strauss's *Don Quixote*—absolutely the limit. I don't think it can be the same man who wrote *The Chocolate Soldier*. An extraordinary noise—no tunes that I could catch hold of—continual fizzling and banging and spasms running across the orchestra, like when you jerk the end of a rope lying on the ground and make waggles run down it. This sort of thing must be an acquired taste.

A good singer (female) singing nice old English songs. Great relief at having someting to catch hold of, and feeling that you are likely to remain in the same key for some time without being jerked off your feet. (Are these folk-songs, I wonder?)

An awfully jolly thing by Bach called Brandenburg Concerto, No. 3. I find there were six of these, none of them by Brahms. It was in diddle-dum, diddle-dum time, like a lot of other things by Bach, and very like them in tune also. The orchestra *stood up*, like the Hallelujah Chorus, only there it is the audience. The tune keeps working up and down through the different instruments all the time, and they pick it up in turn and pass it on, apparently

all quite independently, but it all comes right in the end. Terrific applause and we tried for an encore, but the rules are against it.

J. R. H.

Thursday, 13th September.

My last night at the ticket. Heard a Violin Concerto by Tschaikowsky, with some very good tunes in it : but the whole thing sounded rather odd. It was not like Strauss, as it had a definite go in it, and didn't simply fizzle and explode : on the other hand, it gave you that tired feeling which you do not get in the classical composers. I think T. must have had the hump at times pretty badly, and invented chords to relieve his feelings.

There was also a jolly thing—overture to *Don Giovanni.* I don't know what the opera is about, but if it is the same as *Don Juan,* I think Byron must have altered the story a good deal, as this music didn't seem very suitable to Donna Julia and Haidée and the rest. I thought of asking Miss W. about it, but—judging from Byron—it might be rather a float-face.

The rest was not very exciting, except a thing called Valse Triste by Sibelius (odd name !). It represents a woman dying thinking about

the waltzes she used to have, and then the ghosts of her former partners come in and waltz in her bedroom, getting quicker and quicker, and then she dies. A nice cheerful piece.

Here endeth the lesson. I am going to the Fourth Symphony to-morrow, but as I shan't have the ticket, I shan't have to make a note.

J. R. H.

Friday, 14th September.

Henry always says that he has two infallible ways of getting abreast of forthcoming marriages. One is to take the nine o'clock train on Monday mornings in October from his native town to London, and see who is seeing who off. The other is to go to the Fourth Symphony and see who is sitting next who. (Whoms be blowed.)

I do not wish to be taken as subscribing to this doctrine, and nothing is further from my thoughts than to suggest or imply directly or remotely anything at all. But on reaching the hall to-night I certainly noticed :—

(*a*) Lorimer and a sweet young thing in an inverted coal-scuttle ;

(*b*) Wilkes and a ditto ditto in a smack-me-and-run-away ;

(*c*) Harrison and Flavia with a red-headed flapper, presumably of the same race ;

(*d*) Rhoda and the Collapsible Hat (I can never remember his name) ;

(*e*) Lane, with the cultured shorthand-writer on the next staircase (I expect she made him come ; I know she reads Sonnets from the Portuguese at lunch).

But I dare say there is nothing in it—merely coincidence.

Anyhow, I think they make too much of this aspect of the Fourth Symphony. No doubt the slow movement has some objective reference—that serene and beautiful song, sung at full length with the ease of a happy man reposing on his happiness, with all kinds of charming ornamentations breaking out all over it. Personally, I do not set much store by the heart-beats (*i.e.* the drum figure) or the emphatic declaration of fidelity (*i.e.* the concluding chords) or the other subtleties in which programme makers delight. But the thing as a whole is in some sense the song of a lover—the obverse side of the medal whose reverse is found in the C Minor Symphony.

Granted this, what about the rest of it?

Is there any objective reference in the Introduction, 1st Movement, Scherzo and Finale? Are they anything else but purely delightful and beatific music, studies in syncopation as an index of high spirits (just as the Unfinished Symphony is a study in syncopation as an index of low spirits), standing refutations of pessimism, and forming on the whole the one symphony which meets Mozart on his own ground? And if they are so, why look for anything more? Beethoven may have been in love when he wrote them, but that does not make them love-poems. An uncle of mine wrote a bluebook once when he was in love.

I begin to fear that the Beethoven public is a little too serious. It wants to be tortured with moral problems, or at any rate to find something objective in the music to moralise about. It will not let the poor fellow simply enjoy himself, as he was obviously doing in this symphony: it insists on ascribing all his high spirits to the Countess Teresa (or whoever it was), and searching for little bits to indicate yearning, eternity, rapture, transfiguration, elevation of feelings above the categories of space and time, and so forth. And so generally it concentrates on the slow movement and

misses all the rest—the introduction with its transition from a brooding calm to the keenest exhilaration, the grace and swiftness of the first subject, the little jump of the fiddles in the trio, the swirl of the finale, which always reminds me of the overture to *Figaro*. Henry, by the way, manages to find in the finale some illustration of Bergsonian principles, the fiddles being the flux of impressions, and the short phrases in the bass the mind occasionally attending to it, or something like that. This only illustrates what I was saying above.

But I am writing all this in a half-hearted spirit; for in fact the Symphony was not the best thing we heard to-night. That place of honour must be reserved for the Bach Concerto in E for Violin, Organ, and Strings. It is mainly the last movement which does it. The first movement is, so to speak, a sound piece of Bach at the good Brandenburg level; the second is one of his profound and moving meditations in slow time. But the third is pure genius made audible to men. The effect was partly a visual one—a girl in white standing erect and alone in front of the dark mass of strings, leading them in the concerted parts like a hero at the head of his troops, and continuing

alone into those wonderful solos which whirled us through all the phases of rapture and any number of keys back to the joyful reiterations of the orchestra. The audience became simply one collective vortex of ecstasy : and the roar at the end shattered (for once) the iron rule on the programme which says that Encores are not permitted in the first part of the programme. So we had it once again.

Through all the Symphony I had the Bach still in my head, and was living over again those imperishable moments. At the end I went home swiftly and alone. I was in such a state that I feared if I met people they might think I had been listening to the Fourth Symphony.

Saturday, 15th September.

There were various hints from interested quarters to-night that if I did not want the ticket a use could be found for it, but I remained selfishly obtuse, and sat through a whole Saturday night programme, compensating by surfeit for my fortnight's abstinence. And the end of it —perhaps the fitting end of a Saturday night— is that I am left speculating wearily about religion and sentiment, and the mysterious bond which

somehow connects these two very different things. It is a problem not confined to music : one meets it in pictures of a certain type, and in novels—especially Christian-martyr novels like *Quo Vadis*. For some obscure reason, the artistic presentation of religion in this country in the nineteenth century always got itself mixed up with sloppy tunes and meretricious chords and roses and pink cheeks and circular faces and all the superficial sensuous abstractions which are summed up under the name of sentiment.

The problem pursued me all through to-night's programme. It began with 'Waft her, angels, to the skies,' which a gentleman sang with some difficulties among the higher notes, and which set me thinking of the many rather trivial and sentimental tunes dumped by Handel on the public (along with much splendour and sublimity) under the name of Sacred Music. The feeling was intensified when this was closely followed by an insufferable religious song by Gounod—a tune trivial and sentimental to the last degree, suggesting the aspirations and regrets of an unsuccessful lady-killer not quite sober. Finally, I was lashed to frenzy by an extremely modern composition in the luscious-

oriental style, belonging to what Henry calls the Peach-Brandy-and-Eternity school. It was not specifically religious, but it was full of that sloppy kind of mysticism—love is stronger than death, love transcends time and space, hold my hand and let us talk about world-without-end, and so forth—which derives directly from the religious-sentimental song of the Gounod type, just as rotten fruit develops into iridescent pulp. The only hope for people who fall into this line of thought is a stringent diet of cold baths and Kant's *Critique*, to make them understand the terms they are using; or—if they are too far gone—instant burial. As they are stronger than death they would have no legitimate cause of complaint. Some day I should like to say exactly what I think about this kind of music.

No doubt the *Ancient and Modern Hymns* were largely responsible for this confusion of thought. They were about all the music the normal respectable nineteenth-century citizen got, or at least they gave him his only taste of that enormously important human experience, communal singing. If the tunes had been decently selected we might have antedated the English 'renouveau' by thirty years. As

it was, that calamitously comprehensive term 'Sacred Music'—*i.e.* music set to words derived from the scriptures or dealing with religious subjects—brought in the tares with the wheat, with the result that the citizen was allowed to wallow in 'Hark, hark, my soul' under the full assurance that he was indulging in a spiritual activity and materially promoting the cause of religion; just as in an earlier generation he had been allowed to regard the *Elijah* as on a par with the *Christmas Oratorio* (both being Sacred Music), or, earlier still, had accepted with equal awe and reverence the elegant air of 'He shall feed His flock,' and the profound heart-searchings of 'The people that walked in darkness.'

These are only preliminary shots at stating the problem, and I cannot work it out any further without entrenching on the sanctity of Sunday. So I will merely record one more impression from to-night's programme—namely, that we are at last shaking ourselves free of false sentiment, not by denying the sentimental facts (which is absurd) but by viewing them clearly and accepting them whole-heartedly. This comfort I derive from that very gracious and lively composition the Cockaigne overture, which

ended the programme. There is a charming little tune in it representing a pair of London lovers—tender and humorous and gay, with no peach-brandy and no disgusting chords and no world-without-end—forming one episode among many others, the military band and the Salvation army and the errand-boy and so forth. George Meredith would have loved this overture: it is just in the mood of his jolliest people. It is also a graceful and (though I say it who shouldn't) well-deserved compliment to Londoners. The ordinary man who conceives London as consisting of Mayfair, Westminster, the City, and Whitechapel (*i.e.* brilliant aristocrats, statesmen, financiers, and the dimly imagined working classes) might wonder whom the composer is really dedicating his overture to. But at the Promenades there is no difficulty: si monumentum requiris circumspice.

Monday, 17th September.

MY DEAR NIGEL,

I return the ticket with many thanks. It was great luck your not wanting it my last night, as I like to finish up with a concert.

But to tell the truth two and a half hours of Wagner was rather a strain, in this weather too I

It is a good deal simply the noise, I think : he does use such a lot of brass. And the poor singers feel it : the woman who sang the closing scene from *Götterdämmerung* nearly died—which perhaps made it more lifelike ! It is a wonderful scene, in spite of the noise, and I nearly wept, especially when the Siegfried theme came in.

We had lots of *Meistersinger*, but I was really almost too hot to stand the noise. It was a great relief to get on to the Siegfried Idyll, which I thought most beautiful. Why didn't he always write in that quiet style ?

I am afraid this is a very dull note, and I hope our uncle will forgive me. I hope the weather will get cool again for you poor people in London. Imagine me to-morrow sleeping with the stream sounding outside and the creepers tapping the window. I shall be back towards the end of the month.

Your affte. cousin,

RHODA G. R. CLARKE.

Tuesday, 18th September.

What an enormous advantage it is that in orchestral music there are no superior people ! All the other arts, as far as I know them, have

got superior people badly. There is some strange and ungodly bond linking the Higher Thought to post-impressionism, to certain sorts of realistic novels, to poetry with swear-words in it, and to argumentative plays ; and if you are a superior person you have to like all these things, or proclaim yourself a weakling. Consequently views on art get hopelessly mixed up with views on social, political, and moral questions ; you cannot enter a picture gallery, a theatre, or a circulating library without feeling as if you are going to the poll, and wondering if you are on the register. Artistic criticism becomes a department of minority-reporting ; and a municipal by-election may be a triumph (or a smack in the eye) for Matisse or Strindberg.

But in music the boot is on the other leg ; the superior people, in so far as they have any views, are reactionaries, while the revolutionaries are not superior people. Higher Thought does not run to music much, and when it does it runs mainly to chamber music and particularly Brahms. It is never quite sure whether it likes Wagner. True, Wagner got politically excited in 1848, defied the musical orthodoxy of his day, and put into his operas—or said he put in—philosophic views which can be fitted into the

scheme of Higher Thought. On the other hand, he is frightfully noisy ; he got drunk ; he dramatised Christian ritual ; he is thoroughly popular with the middle-classes both in England and Germany ; his philosophic ideas are overlaid with a mass of music of a picturesque and even sensuous character ; and he is generally inclined to be emotional, and emotional about the wrong things. And his views about women are simply appalling. On the whole he is not an asset in the regeneration-apparatus of the future.

If Wagner goes, the rest of his crew—who shared his faults and had no philosophic ideas—must clearly go too. What on earth has Higher Thought to say to Liszt, or Tschaikowsky, or Strauss ? It is true that some years ago a faint-hearted attempt was made to identify Strauss with the cause of progress, and to prove that *Elektra* (or was it *Salomé* ?) was an expression of political yearning ; but this was mainly due to a desire to get at the Censor, who had shown signs of wanting to add Strauss to the assortment of Higher Thought scalps already adorning his girdle. The attempt died quickly, and I do not observe that the Garden Suburb is depopulated on nights when Tod und Verklärung is

played at Queen's Hall—still less Till Eulenspiegel, which contains passages most distressing to earnest thinkers.

Meantime, the musical revolutionaries know nothing whatever of Higher Thought. When they are not employed in slaughtering the academics, or jumping with both feet through the conservatories of musical orthodoxy, they are mostly normal and amiable people who could not tell you the difference between the poor-rate and the birth-rate. Their interest is primarily in music ; they think and feel in terms of music, and when they try to express themselves in the medium of words they are so profoundly unintelligible, even to each other, that no harm is done. And their audience—the good, solid orchestral audience of London—mostly follows suit. The first question for them is, ' Do I like this music ? ' and not ' How does this music square with Mr. Jones's views on the purpose of life ? '

The occasion of these remarks was a quite modern Concerto written by an Englishman of under forty, which we heard to-night. It is a singularly beautiful work, and we enjoyed it very much ; but even where it sounded strange and unaccustomed, we went at it in the right

way. That is to say, we tried to grasp it by the aid of other music which we had heard, and the senses and instinct which this hearing had developed in us. We did not feel that it was necessarily linked by the filaments of higher thought to certain types of painting and poetry and drama, so that we were bound by deduction from some grand principle to take a certain view of it.

And if any one says that it is rather absurd to judge advanced modern music in the light of Raff's Cavatina, the *Tannhäuser* overture, the Prologue to *Pagliacci* and other works which this audience loves, I reply two things. First, it is better to judge by Raff's Cavatina than by Dostoieffsky. And if you think hard enough you can see the reason for this: namely, that Raff's Cavatina is music and Dostoieffsky is not.

Secondly, this audience loves a great many things beside Raff's Cavatina. It loves the Brandenburg concertos, and the Mozart symphonies, and heaps of Handel, and all the symphonies, concertos, and overtures of Beethoven, and lots of Schubert, and some Schumann, and all the Wagner it can hear, and a good deal of Liszt, and two concertos and three symphonies

of Tschaikowsky, and plenty more. The musical experience of this audience, taken as a whole, is fairly comprehensive. The Promenades alone go on every night for ten weeks, and many of us hold season tickets. If you continue year after year aggregating this very sound and catholic mass of musical experience, after a time some of it is bound to stick—to take form within you and grow into concrete musical sensibility. Multiply yourself by 1500 or so, and you get a body of taste and critical capacity not to be sneezed at. The Promenades are really forming an educated musical democracy, and its judgments are becoming important factors in contemporary music.

The fact that this democracy is taking more and more to the modern composers is reassuring to timid people like myself, who have been unnerved by the modernist propaganda of other arts, and shiver in wretched self-consciousness before anything that is new. It encourages us to perform that most difficult of all tasks—to take a contemporary's utterance, and judge him simply on his merits (in so far as we can understand him), quite apart from his school and his antecedents and what other people say we ought to think about people analogous to him, and

even what he says himself on the subject—all the hideous intellectual apparatus, in fact, which makes criticism like a proposition of Euclid. Theoretically, this is what every honest man ought to do with every work of art, but the plain fact is that he doesn't.

And, goodness gracious, here have I been talking about the higher-thought affinities of modern music, and quite forgetting folk-song! What would Flavia say? But, in fact, the connection between folk-song and higher thought is as yet undetermined (and so for that matter is its connection with modern music). Folk-song is, spiritually, on the fence; and no one knows whether it will come down on the side of plain-living and high-thinking, or on that of G. K. Chesterton, good old England, and beer. We Promenaders take folk-song as it comes, and like some of it and don't like the rest, an attitude which precludes impressive generalisation.

There was some singularly fresh, frank, unsophisticated and beautiful music in the programme to-night, but it was not folk-song. It was written by a Viennese of that highly bourgeois period, the early nineteenth century, as an overture to a silly play called *Rosamunde*.

Wednesday, 19th September.

I was late to-night, and came only just in time for the symphony. As I dropped into my place the solitary, mournful voice of the clarinet stole out across the hall, accompanied by strings in their lowest tones, the whole sounding to the last degree strange, gloomy and oppressive. The programmes call it the 'destiny' theme, and it is not a bad description: only it is the polar opposite of Beethoven's theme of that name. It is destiny as a dead-weight, inhuman and brutal, crushing down hope and belief and effort: not destiny as a valiant assailant, hitting you as man to man. I may have been suffering slightly from the Pathetic Fallacy—it has been a sultry day, and a storm is brewing as I write; but certainly this introduction to-night was overwhelming.

If, as the programmes say, the symphony is meant to show the gradual transformation of this mournfulness into joy, it fails of its main purpose. The last two movements undoubtedly try to cheer up a little: but the third is only an elegant bagatelle, and the joy of the finale is somewhat feverish and hectic, suggesting a man plunging into a violent flurry of activity and enveloping himself in hustle and noise in

order to forget something. It resembles in this the third movement of the 'Pathétique,' with the difference that there the final utterance of tragedy is still to come, while here it is already over.

But the temporal sequence of symphony movements—like the sequence of sections within each movement—must never be confused with the spiritual priority of the moods they represent. It is an open question whether the real finale of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is in the third or fourth movements; indeed he himself, by a masterstroke, left it doubtful: while to my mind the finale of the Ninth Symphony is not there at all, but is contained in the Seventh.

But if the symphony fails in its main purpose, it succeeds so triumphantly in its subordinate purpose that we need hardly trouble about the rest. The reason why the last two movements fall a trifle flat, is that the two preceding movements are works of sheer inspiration. They sweep along torrentially, swirling this way and that in violent oscillation of mood, ranging through every shade of melodic quality from supreme beauty to barbaric clangour, unrestful, unreserved, morbid if you like, far removed from the feelings and deportment of a gentleman, but

continuously inspired and utterly sincere. One is left with the impression, not of an artist composing, but of a man possessed, uttering aloud his frenzy, his passion, his transient calms, and his insurgent unrest, using the instruments of the orchestra as if they were his limbs and organs of expression.

The first theme is a warning not to generalise about rhythm. By a curious coincidence it is in exactly the same measure and time ($\frac{6}{8}$ and $\dot{\text{J}}. = 104$) as the Vivace of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. With Beethoven you would say that it is the most lively, subtle, elastic and heart-opening of all measures, exuberant in the pride and joy of life. Just listen to it here! It is strained, uneasy, ominous: it has an appearance of speed and excitement, but it is like the excitement of fever hurrying into delirium: it stops and syncopates itself, not like the Beethoven tunes in an excess of high spirits, but with a dead trip-up and sudden cessation of the vital functions. It gives place for a while to the second theme and the marvellous little episode preceding it, but returns for a truly tremendous working out, and after the repeat holds the stage alone, dying away lugubriously and with mutterings into silence.

The second theme is not much better. It starts in a tune so simple and pathetic—*molto cantabile ed. espr.*—that for a moment it trembles on the verge of banality. But then, with increasing force, it climbs up and up among the most poignant notes of the fiddles, the syncopations cutting across the rhythm with the suggestion of ineffable yearning, till it becomes simply a wild cry, and with a quickening of time we plunge back into clamour.

(This theme, by the way, is also a warning not to be too clever. It is in $\frac{6}{8}$ time, but syncopated, so that if you disregard the beat you can hear it as a plain succession of crotchets. I used to listen to it in this way, and fondly imagined that it was a reminiscence—subtly transmuted—of the destiny theme in the introduction, the moral being that in all sweetness in this life there lurks a tragedy and so forth. But let me hereby assure any one who feels doubtful that there is nothing in this theory whatever. If you don't believe me go and listen to the symphony four times more.)

The episode is one of the things which make me see visions, though the programmes mostly disregard it. It comes just after the first theme has worked itself up to a sudden climax, the whole

orchestra bellowing *fff*, and the fiddles scurrying up to a high F sharp. The clamour suddenly drops, concentrating itself on a tightly clenched utterance of four bars from the strings, rounded with a descending skirl from the wood-wind. (It is one of the places where the high notes of the 'cellos are used to suggest strain : the four upper string parts begin on the same note.) The time slackens a trifle, and then recovers. The wood-wind repeats the utterance, more quietly, and with a melancholy colour stealing in. And then the horns, calm and splendid as ever, deliver two little dropping phrases, and come softly down the scale, alternating with chords on the strings. It is a marvellous orchestral effect, and the change in the later repetition from the horn to the trumpet—harder, more penetrating, more incisive—gives just the added touch of certainty to the tragedy that is needed when we have tried both themes to the uttermost and found comfort and consolation nowhere.

At the end of the first movement we applauded according to precedent : but even this deplorable habit could not break the spell. The air was still thick with memories of torture and baffled hopes and rebellion and despair ; the clamours

of the inferno were still in our ears. Onto this chaos of unrest fell the solemn chords—far down in the heavy notes of the lower strings—which usher in the Andante. Then, alone and aloft above them, a single horn uplifted his voice in the most splendid of all songs—at once calm and profound, courageous and resigned, suggesting some rest beyond the struggle, some beauty that survives for the desperate.

And now comes the turning point of the symphony. If this song had been allowed to dominate the Andante, if something mild in the way of a continuation or second theme had been added to it, with the little interlude for clarinet and oboe to follow, we might have won through to the third movement in a comparatively calm state of mind, and ultimately forgotten our troubles in the finale. Instead of this, just as the horn gathers itself up for a final benediction, the voice of the oboe breaks in—cool and clear and jaunty—takes up the note on which the horn was poised, delivers a little phrase which lifts the key from D to F sharp, and climbs up across the rhythm in duple time, dragging the horn after it. It is the first statement of the second theme, which is destined for a big part later on : but for the moment it sounds

almost trivial, completely breaks the emotional current, and plunges us back once more into confusion and discontent, wondering what is to come.

We do not wonder long. The wood-wind and strings pull the key down to D again, and the song re-enters on the 'cellos—less remote and isolated in feeling this time, and more strongly tinged with the duple rhythm. It ends on the reiterated note of B, with a lovely softening of the harmony as the horns, strings, and bassoon below it drop from G sharp to G; and then —pianissimo—the second theme re-enters, no longer cool and detached, but in the same key and marked *còn noblezza*, surging in full flood on the top of the horn-song. It increases in strength: the phrase in duple time goes up and up into the keen agony of the high violin notes; and those of us who are following it in the score catch the phrase *con desiderio*. It is the word which might stand at the head of the whole symphony—desiderium, the longing for what is lost.

And so, with our transient balance of mind effectively unsettled, we pass through some temporary ease in the interlude, which leads us straight into a most terrific statement of

the motto theme ; and so back to the song and the second theme both with renewed force, destined only to be wiped out again by the motto theme, delivered finally at double pace by the trombones. It is the last blow, and it silences the horn-song for ever. Only over the stricken field, accompanied by the softest shiverings of the wind, the strings deliver a ghost of the second theme, a mere memory of passion and desire, which dies away in the depths as the movement ends.

Of the rest I have no time to speak—indeed I should long ago have written ' Thursday ' at the head of the page. The last two movements contain many remarkable and beautiful things, but they are mere shadows after the earlier part. True, there is still ringing in my ears the last triumphant utterances of the transmuted destiny theme, but it is dying away and will not trouble me in my dreams to-night—or rather this morning. There, if I hear anything, it will be either the horn-song of the Andante, or the notes of the violins which follow, climbing up and up, passionately, fruitlessly, con desiderio.

Thursday, 20th September.

My dear Nigel,

I return the ticket with many thanks, but this time I believe you really have let me in for an awful float-face. It wasn't your fault and it wasn't really mine : it was all that idiot Henry—that is if it really *was* a float-face.

It was like this. When I went in I met Miss Ward there, whom you may remember—she had a row with Henry, you know. I had just bought a programme, but she told me to put it away and not look at it—very bad thing to prejudice yourself instead of letting the music come to you without associative prepossessions, or words to that effect. I said, wasn't it a good thing to know what you were going to hear, and she said, just as well not : she knew the only novelty they were doing, and was very keen to hear it—a suite for Violin and Orchestra by some one (name sounded like Benson), based on Scandinavian national tunes, and therefore absolutely wing three-quarter as far as progress went. I took a hasty glance at my programme as I put it away, just by way of a safeguard, as I knew I was in for squalls. All I could see was some name like Wagner at the beginning, and lower down something

ending in -etti, and (quite clearly) the name Mackintosh. Miss W.'s small sister, who was with her, said she had last Friday's programme, with to-night's programme on the back, and that I was to guess the composer's names as we went along and see how many I could guess right. A cheerful look out for me, what?

Well, we led off with a very jolly thing, with some excellent tunes in it: it was rather too pleasant for the normal Wagner, I thought, and not in enough different keys: but the brass instruments had no end of an outing, and there was a kind of excitement about it—a lot of things happening at once, if you see what I mean—which recalled W. So at the end, I guessed 'Early Wagner,' which was a bit of a hedge, and scored nearly full marks. It wasn't by Wagner, but by Weber (you see, the W and the -er I had seen on my programme misled me): but Miss W. said 'Early Wagner' was a very good description of it.

The next thing we heard a man behind read out, so the betting was off—rather luckily for me. The name was Thomas, I think.

Then came a perfectly rotten song—in some foreign language. I remembered the -etti and guessed Italian opera (like spaghetti and confetti,

you see). Top marks again : it was by Donizetti. I remembered him because the Count in *The Woman in White* whistles a tune from him, and is detected at one of his operas by the other (reformed) brigand. Miss W. hadn't read it ; so I suppose it is a low taste.

The next thing bored me. I remembered Mackintosh, and guessed ' English—nineteenth century.' Top marks again ; but now I was at the end of what I remembered, and only about three up with probably four to play at least.

Then came a most topping song, which beat us both. She guessed Mozart and I guessed Brahms. The small sister said it was Gluck, so it was honours more or less easy. Miss W. said it was at once too sophisticated and not sophisticated enough for Brahms, and I tried to look as if I agreed. I said I had heard a topping thing by Gluck-Mottl, and she said she had never heard of him.

Well, then we suddenly got invaded. There was not much crowd, and it was very easy to move about. Three very clever-looking girls in glasses descended on Miss W., and at the same time that idiot Henry—he was really responsible for what I am going to tell you about

—loafed up to me to cadge some tobacco. I said to him under my breath, 'For the Lord's sake, tell me what things are coming, as I am supposed to be guessing them without the programme.' Henry said, 'There's only the Mendelssohn and some Berlioz.' I said, 'But what about the suite for orchestra, based on Scandinavian national tunes, by Benson or some name like that, you know? Miss W. said—' 'Oh, that,' said Henry: but just then Miss W. turned round and saw Henry and said, 'I'm surprised to see you here, for a work based entirely on folk-song. Is not Saul among the prophets?'

I saw Henry was rather perplexed, but Miss W. went on to explain to the three girls about the Benson thing, and they all said how ripping folk-song was. Henry then said that if he was Saul there were a lot of compatriots present; and I noticed that one of the three girls—I think her name is Lewis—jumped a little. But this wasn't the real float-face. Miss W. then said to me that as we knew what was coming I might look at my programme and tell them what it was. Henry said, 'Allow me,' and produced his, and began reading out something about the first movement being based on the

famous national air of 'Et voppe dinge huit,' —it sounded like ; and that it was redolent of naïveté, and so forth. I looked over his shoulder and saw the words, 'The Concert Suite for Violin and Orchestra, by Svendsen,' but couldn't read any more as he twitched the paper, and just then a great cheer began as a man with a fiddle walked on to the stage.

Well, the thing was absolutely ripping, I thought—a series of jolly tunes, very clear and sounding *clean*, mostly rather frisky, but one in the slow part simply a dream. The man played it very well, jumping about all over the place with his fiddle, and got terrific applause at the end. I noticed that Miss Lewis, if that is her name, looked a bit puzzled ; but Henry then read out some more hot air about national tunes having the emotional precision which springs from the collective consciousness of a people—which seemed familiar somehow. Then we all said how ripping it was, and the three girls all cracked up folk-song against Henry ; and he said he felt as if he was on the road to Damascus. While they were talking I managed to get out my programme behind Henry's back, by way of a safeguard

against further guessing competitions, and then I suddenly noticed this :—

> 'The performance of the Suite for Violin and Orchestra by Svendsen' (that is what I had seen over Henry's shoulder) 'is unavoidably postponed; and by general request Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E Minor will be substituted.'

Well, then I did some thinking. It was quite clear

(*a*) that we had heard Mendelssohn's Concerto;

(*b*) that Miss W. and the three girls had thought it was Svendsen's Suite;

(*c*) that Henry knew it wasn't, and had made up the programme out of his head (there was nothing about folk-song or emotional precision in the programme);

(*d*) that they had all seen me looking over Henry's shoulder when he read it out. Consequently

(*e*) *if* it was a float-face, I *appeared* to be equally responsible with Henry.

The whole question then is, *was* it a float-face? It all seems to hinge on the following points :—

(1) Was Mendelssohn a Scandinavian? I always thought he was a German.

(2) Did Svendsen live about the same time, or is he modern?

(3) Did Mendelssohn use Scandinavian folk-tunes? Failing this,

(4) Did he use any folk-tunes, and

(5) Did he use them in this Concerto?

If the answer to some or all of these questions is Yes, it's not so bad, *i.e.* one could-quite decently think the Concerto was the Svendsen Suite. But if not—and this is what I am afraid of—Henry has made a fool of Miss W. and her friends, and if they find out they'll think I'm in it too. Had I better explain, or what?

If the Concerto isn't at all like folk-song, it is rather a knock-out all round: for one thing, I like it very much, and I suppose this is rotten taste. But then it is rather interesting, that by making a musical expert like Miss W. think in advance she is going to hear something of a kind she usually likes, when she hears the thing though it isn't *really* of the kind she thinks it is and likes it. Is that associative prepossession?

And I wonder how much of one's opinion of music is really formed that way, *e.g.* if you told me I was going to hear something by Brahms and then played me something absolutely

rotten, should I feel it was rotten as soon as I should if you hadn't told me—that is, assuming I *did* feel that it was rotten, which isn't certain.

Altogether, you see, I'm rather in a hat; so excuse this long letter. I hope you will tell me about points (1) to (5) above. I'm going to learn the programme by heart in future, that is, the *real* programme. Also I'm going to talk to that blighter Henry.

Yours sincerely.

J. R. HARRISON.

Friday, 21st September.

I have been listening to the Fifth Symphony, and rather wish I was a musical critic. To-morrow morning they will simply say, 'The programme also included Beethoven's C Minor Symphony,' implying that both they and their readers know all about it. But the honest Promenader must scorn such subterfuge. The Symphony was so much the biggest thing we heard to-night, yea, in spite of Leonora No. 2, and the first Brandenburg Concerto, and the Equali for Trombones, and it is so much the most important element in the Promenade culture, that I am bound to treat it at some length.

This astonishing Symphony shares with *Hamlet* and a few other things the distinction of being both a great work of art and really popular. Roughly, one hears it twice as often as the next most popular symphonies, the 'Eroica,' the Seventh, the Unfinished of Schubert and the 'Pathétique' of Tschaikowsky, and thrice as often as the Pastoral, or the Fourth, or Mozart's E Flat, or Schubert's Seventh. It is the great unquestioned classic: it is the portal through which thousands have entered into their musical inheritance.

More than this, the C Minor is even getting into literature. Stevenson's fate-battered failure, on his last legs in the shelterless caboose, writes on the wall grandiosely as his epitaph 'the tremendous phrase' of destiny knocking at the door. Another gentleman recently wrote a six-penny novel dealing with the subject, and to avoid any possibility of error printed the A flat 'cello theme of the Andante right across the cover. Finally, a shrewd and cultivated novelist has given us a full-length sketch of the Symphony, calling it 'the most sublime noise that ever penetrated into the ears of man,' and (as far as I can see) mixing up the first and second themes in the Scherzo. At this rate,

in another ten years or so, the novelists will be well abreast of the C Minor, and the most advanced of them may be reaching out after the Seventh (divining it to be somewhat, as the man said).

And the public is right, and the critics are right, and the programmes are right—not even excepting Herr Otto Neitzel, who is a treasure-house of quotations for other interpreters. The first theme *is* a tremendous thing ; there *is* a struggle in the first movement ; the Andante *is* a beautiful relaxation ; the Scherzo *is* a mixture of humour and pure magic ; the transition passage on the drum *is* a miracle ; the finale *is* triumphant ; and the return of the Scherzo *is* precisely the inspiration which is needed at that moment. Until you have thoroughly grasped these facts, and have spaced them out in your mind so that every rehearing of the Symphony falls properly into the framework, until you know your themes by instinct, and can tell on hearing any four bars what movement you are in, you do not know your C Minor, and must not be allowed to gush. I *do* know it, and am going to gush. If any novelist or other person finds it distasteful, let him wait till he has heard the Symphony ten times (I have heard it twenty-two), and

meantime persevere in the study of Sir George Grove.

I suppose the two biggest things are the first theme and the return of the Scherzo. The first theme knocks one flat—there is no other way of putting it. Considered as a melodic phrase, it is nothing—a reiterated note and the third below: it is a mere utterance destitute of sensuous clothing, as spare and simple as a line of Sophocles. But as a theme, as the foundation of a superstructure, it is everything—the knock of destiny, if you like, the tap of an insistent summons, the tremor of profound agitation, the violence of a soul at full stretch—one can weave words round it for ever. There is no mood which leads to or issues from action, no element in human nature which struggles, or doubts, or triumphs or despairs, but you can find some trace of it in this theme. The impression left by the whole of the first movement is simply one of tremendous force: you feel, almost without knowing why, that something big has happened.

The second Scherzo theme—the one which returns in the Finale—is almost equally spare in form, but much more definite in meaning. It is just what Beethoven's contemporaries would

have described as transcendental : it is in the mood which leads from the world of sense to the world of spirit, from the transient and temporary to the permanent and eternal. The splendid and confident Finale has moved from triumph to triumph, asserting with ascending force the strength of mankind and the substance of their achievement ; and then, just as the climax approaches, the fiddles leap away on six reiterated notes into a world where there is no assertion and no triumph, but only the bare outline of a ghostly hint—and the question is left hanging, which world is real. Or rather, this is one out of nine or ten possible and inadequate ways of reducing the passage to words. The last thing I wish to do is to extract from the Finale a proof that there is another world, or that Beethoven believed in it : the most you can say is that this passage implies that there is a mood of such belief in human nature, and that the music appeals to it, and suggests it. Beethoven was writing a Symphony, and not composing a creed ; indeed it would have been quite improper for him to compose a creed in this place, for the Fifth Symphony is not Sacred Music, like the *Elijah*.

This shift of mood from the transient to the

permanent, from appearance to reality, is one of the most characteristic movements in all the Beethoven music. There is another notable example of it in this Symphony near the end of the Andante. The easy and full-bodied tune has been worked over and over in every possible kind of variation, and finally vociferated with the full strength of the orchestra: the terrors of the first movement are partly forgotten, and we have begun to feel confidence again in the stability of the world and its institutions. Then, without warning, the time quickens: the dry voice of the bassoon is heard singing a continuation of the theme to a soft pattering on the strings; the lower strings take it up hastily and anxiously: the fiddles leap in, hurrying to a loud conclusion as though trying to reassure themselves. The whole passage (it is only fourteen bars) suggests a sudden change of mood from content to uncertainty, from ease to apprehension: as if all that went before was a pleasant dream from which we are now awakened. We go suddenly back behind the cheerful optimism of the Andante, and feel the chill wind that blows between the worlds. It reminds one of the passages in which Aristotle, at the end of a substantial argument, suddenly

remarks, '*ἄνωθεν σκεπτέον*,' and proceeds to reargue the whole case from a standpoint which makes everything else seem a most trivial preliminary.

I had a beautiful theory about the second theme in the first movement—the one which the programmes identify with the lady. But having been invented at the tenth hearing, and having gathered force for many hearings after that, to-night it began to shrivel utterly away, and I have serious doubts whether there is anything in it. So I will hear the Symphony once more before attempting to expound it.

I have no time to say any more, except one word on the magnificence of trombones. You may talk of your clarinets and horns, but when I want real epic sublimity of utterance, commend me to three trombones. When we are burying a great man, we ought surely to play the Equali over his grave.

Saturday, September 22nd.

The reaction is come. After a strenuous week, with violent spiritual convulsions on Wednesday and Friday (faithfully recorded above), I played a hard game this afternoon, followed by a hot bath and a cold douche, and ultimately

by those stalwart upholders of sanity—sirloin, apple-pie, double Gloucester, and beer. Having thus shored up my overwrought spiritual fabric with the stout scaffolding of bodily certitude, I sat through a Saturday programme with a pipe in my mouth, supremely content. I had a capital evening, and heard a lot of jolly tunes written by different fellows with funny names, but much of a muchness as far as I could judge. There was a thing called 'Coriolan,' by a man called Beethoven—all about the Shakespeare play, don't you know; and some Hungarian dances by a man called Brahms, and a ripping song by another foreigner, Meyerbeer, and several other things whose names escape me, and Järnefelt's Præludium, and a piece called Kol Nidrei, and the overture to an opera called *Rienzi*. But what I always say is, why worry about names, so long as the tune is all right?

This is a true record of how I felt at the time, and on thinking it over—or rather on letting it wobble at will across my mental arena, which is all I am capable of at the moment—I feel that while this mood may be (alas!) a rare and transient one, there is nothing to show that it is a lower mood than the normal. Granted that in a lower mood a man enjoys Meyerbeer

and is bored with 'Coriolan,' and that in a higher mood he enjoys 'Coriolan' and is bored with Meyerbeer; is it necessarily a lower mood in which he enjoys them both very much? Is the saint who loves all humanity lower than the ordinary man, who likes some and dislikes others of his fellows? You may say that the saint is really more keenly conscious than any one else of the different qualities of men, but that he values the common humanity so much more than the different qualities that unity overrides difference and so forth. But this kind of paradox is all stuff, and, on a Saturday night, I refuse to entertain it. If the saint is worth twopence, he does not care a straw for differences of moral fibre, and feels just the same to burglars and heroes and other saints and economic lecturers and barristers and folk-song experts and leader-writers and women. Very well then: Beethoven was a hero, and Meyerbeer was a burglar, and Brahms was a leader-writer, and Wagner was an economic lecturer, and Järnefelt was a folk-song expert. And I am a saint; at least, I felt like one this evening.

Anyhow I decline to argue, and am going to bed.

Monday, 24th September.

Friendship is all very well; but I fail to see why Harrison should always have the ticket on Mondays. We all of us owe it to ourselves (do we not?) to cultivate our faculties to their highest pitch; and we cannot do this without an occasional glut of Wagner. It is no good pretending that he does not matter. Even if you consider him an aberration in the true development of music, you cannot disregard him. A volcanic eruption is an aberration in the development of the surrounding district; but if you are studying its geography you can hardly pretend that the eruption did not occur.

We skipped about to-night, as is our custom, up and down the great man's life—from *Tannhäuser* to the 'Ring' and back through *Tristan* to *Lohengrin*, and so again to *Siegfried* and thence to *Parsifal*, and finally, with a stupendous leap, back to *Rienzi*. But it is not a bad way of going to work. One can make too much of different phases of Wagner, and forget the most important thing of all, namely, that it was one man expressing himself in music, and that though he differed from himself at various times he differed from other people much more. It is a long way from *Siegfried* to *Rienzi*, but

it is much farther to 'Woo thou the Snowflake,' by Sir Arthur Sullivan, which, by the way, I greatly enjoyed on Saturday night.

Out of the disordered vortex of feeling which I carry away from a good solid Monday night, two main impressions emerge. The first is technical, or rather, the humble effort of the layman after the technical. It is, crudely, that every one—composer, orchestra, and conductor—have been working like devils, or, if you prefer it, like demigods. There is always a surge of titanic energy about the music, which sweeps over the orchestra like a possessing spirit. Every instrument is endowed with supernatural life: the violins sing like the sons of morning or wail like souls disconsolate: the trombones shake the world with their thunder: the horns deliver magic incantations from some purer æther: the drums remind us most emphaticaliy that bliss is it in this dawn to be alive, and to be a drum is very heaven indeed. The result is what the anti-Wagnerians call a beastly noise, and up to a point one can sympathise with them. Going from the older classics to Wagner is (technically) rather like going from a church service to a meeting of the Hungarian Parliament.

But there the parallel breaks down. To say that the end of it all is meaningless chaos is—well, meaningless chaos. The end is music. It is not quite like any other music, but it is more like it than it is like politics or a street riot or the finals of the English Cup. If any one tells you that Wagner is not music, don't argue with him. Don't even quote the Siegfried Idyll, and say that anyhow *that* is music. It will not convince him, and to argue in this way shows a lack of proper pride. It is like beginning your explanation to Her parents by saying that you have an uncle who is a member of a West End club, and anyhow *he* is a gentleman. Take Wagner at his rowdiest and most difficult and make your interlocutor listen to him : make him hear, working in and through the clamour, the great, strong, structural themes which uphold the mighty fabric. True, they have many of them been ridden near to death with criticism and exegesis : they have been called names—the Pilgrims' March, and Siegfried's horn, and the sleep motif, and the love glance, and even (*a*) and (*b*) and 'see summary No. 126.' But they are still there, alive and kicking, ready to stir the heart and illumine the understanding and irradiate the intelligible

world—if you will only listen. In short, they are music.

And really, except for the *Rienzi* overture—which is a cheerful piece of music and don't mean any harm—it is difficult to imagine the most hardened anti-Wagnerian listening to our programme of to-night unconvinced. The prelude to the Third Act of *Tannhäuser*, ditto of *Lohengrin*, ditto of *Tristan*—with the *cor anglais* quite indescribable—Forest Murmurs, the song of the Rhinemaidens, the Good Friday music—well, it was no end of an evening.

Tuesday, September 25th.

I feel as if I had just left the kindergarten and were bracing myself up for the weird and greater world of Form I. in a Preparatory School. Some mysterious impulse has moved all our young composers to write child music of late, and we had it all to-night—children's suites, dances for a children's play, songs of youth, three cheers for Froebel, and so forth. The result was most pleasant. All the young composers were in their happiest vein, with quaint rhythms and graceful tunes, and just a suggestion of 'de haut en bas' (Anglicé, condescension) about the whole, as if they were

dissembling their skill and wearing like a flower their profound knowledge of the rules of harmony and how to break them. Now and then they showed off a little, letting a chord-progression wander awhile through the unexplored realms of tonality until it returned into daylight ; but mostly they were content with the diatonic scale, like a classic tragedian playing charades with his family.

Children are a useful artistic pretext nowadays when any one wants to give play to his imagination. The modern artist, conscious of the awful mission with which he is charged, normally keeps his imagination under severe control : if he once becomes graceful and easy, he exposes himself to misconstruction and to the suspicion of trifling with the great causes which are committed to his peculiar care. But once whisper ' children ' to him and he is quite comfortable : his tortured soul relaxes, and his corrugated brow is smoothed : he can let himself go on the flood of melody or colour or poetry, or whatever he happens to be handling, with a clear conscience. He is doing it for children—I mean, of course, for ' the ' children. No one can say a word against him, or accuse him of surrendering causes : he is only being kind to the little ones.

So far as concerns the signatory of this document, long may this gracious hypocrisy continue! Long may the cultured adult, whose conscience whispers to him that the theatre is a great social force, resort eagerly to *Peter Pan* for the nominal benefit of a niece or daughter, who has to be torn with reluctance from her study of Ibsen or Ravel! Long may the *Rose and the Ring* flourish, yea, and the *Child's Garden of Verses*, and the *Just So Stories*! And long may our young composers write children's music! Even if the children do not care about it, and call it jejune or immature or rot or bilgewater or whatever the favourite term is, still the composer enjoys himself, and we others have a pleasant evening. Give me tunes like these, and I will cheerfully subscribe to the extreme doctrines of child-worship, and disown and reprobate the disgusting opinions of Aristotle and classical antiquity in general, who had no conception of the intrinsic beauty of child-life, but merely regarded children as potential men and women and incapable in their nonage of doing or saying or understanding anything worth mention. The horrid brutes! No wonder they exposed their offspring on mountains, and beheaded them for disobedience. It was like them. The modern

habit of sending children away to boarding-schools is surely more humane, and sets parents free—particularly at this time of year—to come to concerts with a sense of relief, which enables them to enjoy child-music to the full.

We also had the overture to *Figaro*, which alone justifies the creation of the world.

Wednesday, 26th September.

I spoke too soon about the Fourth Symphony. Since Friday week Lane has been pensive and abstracted at his work, and Lorimer was heard whistling the fiddle-theme out of tune: and to-night comes a line from Rhoda which demands a congratulatory reply and a stern resolve to remember to call the Collapsible Hat 'Gilbert' in future. They will be back in a week, and a Seventh Symphony party is in train to acknowledge the new status.

These interesting circumstances distracted my attention from the programme to-night, and also leave me very little time to write about it. I must therefore treat with disrespectful brevity that august work the Third Symphony of Brahms. To speak truth, I never find it an easy symphony to grapple to my soul with hoops of steel. The first subject always strikes me as

a fuss about nothing, screaming away in the upper octaves in order to get itself heard, in a sort of hysterical protest against the consciousness of not being a success. The slow movement and finale, too, I respect rather than love. But when it comes to the third movement, I recant and wallow. The main theme is a duck, and causeth the heart of the hearer to expand. To a layman it seems to be conceived in the air and chucked indiscriminately on to any instrument that happens to be unoccupied—with very unequal effects. It is not conceived orchestrally, but is just a good song dealt out to the orchestra in rations. Experts, however, assure me that the orchestration, though not crudely obvious to the outsider (meaning me) is really full of subtleties ; so I have not the faintest doubt that it is all for the best. Anyhow, when the horn sings it, I hug myself and order the carriage to come round next week at the same time.

It was a cheerful and appreciative audience. Am I wrong, or is there some mystic bond uniting Brahms with school-girls ? Whenever I hear one of the master's works I am surrounded by phalanxes of white muslin enveloping young English womanhood in a state of rapt ecstasy.

Is Brahms taught in girl-schools, or forbidden by the authorities, or what?

I must ask Henry, who is sure to have some ingenious explanation.

Thursday, 27th September.

DEAR NIGEL,

Ticket returned herewith, and I am much obliged: I worked off part of the Hump, which I have got badly.

Most of it was rather boring, I thought; but I liked a few things. There were two 'Songs without Words' by Mendelssohn, and a 'Chant sans Paroles' by Tschaikowsky, which comes to much the same thing as far as names go, but in itself is quite different. It was quite cheery and pretty, which I rather think is not T.'s usual style, is it?

The Mendelssohn I have heard on the pianola, and like.

There was also a waltz by Offenbach from the *Tales of Hoffmann*, which was perfectly ripping—a dreamy sort of tune, which suggested a hot night and being rather above yourself, if you see what I mean. I suppose it reminds one of dances; I certainly felt as if other things did not matter much, and now was the time

to let oneself go, which is just what one feels at a dance. It is like something between church and a really good speech at a public meeting. I don't feel up to writing any more. Sorry.

Yours,

J. R. H.

I forgot to stick in the ticket and so have had to open this blessed thing again.

Friday, 28th September.

I am feeling a trifle tucked up with a heavy week, and must in honour record the fact that beyond arousing in me a passionate desire to go afield, the Pastoral Symphony did not move me much. I am going to gratify this desire during the week-end, and hope thereby to revert to the normal.

It makes it worse that generally I love this Symphony, and uphold it against its many detractors. It is very pleasant, and highly amusing : the jokes are mild, but all come off. And the Storm is a real beauty, doing everything that is necessary with the minimum of orchestral effort. There is a scurry of fiddles down the scale which is like a first rehearsal of the tremendous passage in the first movement of the Ninth, where I think Beethoven undoubtedly

had a physical storm—as well as several other kinds of storm—in his head. But this is all reminiscence: and to-night I must own that the Symphony passed me by. I shall not be able to face the detractors until I have heard it again.

For the same reason I cannot dilate on the Tragic Overture of Brahms, or on Bach's 'Agnus Dei,' except to say that I don't like 'Agnus' pronounced 'Arnyus'—on the analogy of the Italian -gn in Campagna, and so forth, I suppose. It is always hazardous to dogmatise about Latin pronunciation, but I would ask the singers to reflect whether Dido would really have killed herself for a gentleman who said to her—in the middle of a most splendid prologue—'Et quorum pars marnya fui.'

I have had enough music for the present, and the ticket shall go for a short Ausflug.

Saturday, 29th September.

DEAR NIGEL,

Be at peace, O timid one. I am not at all offended at being given the ticket for Saturday night. I have heard music that has stood the severest of all tests at the hands of its generation: it has made money. My music has not: but do I repine?

Let us first treat Sir Arthur Sullivan, Knight. There was nothing on the programme composed by a crowned head or a peer or a bishop,[1] so the Knight comes first. He knew how to do it! None of your heart-searchings for him. Give him a piece of paper and a pen and a stale idea and a simple tune and somebody else's harmonic effects, and he could whack out his twenty guineas at a sitting! Rebecca's Prayer, from *Ivanhoe*, is indeed a touching thing, and might well have come out of the *Mikado*. The simple Hebrew maiden and her virginal yearnings—by the three-colour process, please, with plenty of pink, in time for our Christmas number.

Next comes Beethoven. Though only a foreigner, he was a Von, and thus takes precedence of the Esquires and Misters. His Song of the Flea is almost worthy of Sir Arthur himself, though Sir A. would not have been so coarse. We were broad-minded enough to laugh. The other compositions of von Beethoven are obscure and difficult, and I doubt if they made money.

Among the mere commoners, I cannot settle the degrees of precedence, and so take the richest first. F. M. Bartholdy, a Jew, wrote

[1] Unless you count Liszt.

a pleasing overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There is too much accompaniment and not enough tunes, but the imitation of the donkey is most lifelike. I daresay F. M. B. met asses in the course of his short but active life.

Verdi is one of these fiery organ-grinders, and his works are beyond me. The excerpt we had appeared to be extremely passionate, and some one was about to die : but I barely understand the language, and the translation on my programme was harder to follow than the original. But I believe Verdi made money. You will remember that Browning, in a famous passage, criticised his orchestration : but time has proved Browning wrong. Somebody told me once that nowadays there are signs of advancing even beyond Verdi : but I never believe what I am told.

The other people were mostly Jews, playing on their national harps, with the exception of Breezy Bizet—a Frenchman, and please pronounce his name accordingly. He wrote *Carmen*. I do not know if it is the thing there is a good pull-up for in the Tottenham Court Road. It sounds appropriate.

Who am I to answer your indelicate questions about Brahms and schoolgirls? The school

I attended was one for boys : nor am I in the counsels of the rising female generation. Vixi puellis semper uninteresting—kindly pronounce the last word like a Briton rather than an American, or the Alcaic will become like a Galliambic. Speaking conjecturally, and as an outsider, I should say that in the orchestral works of Brahms there is a restraint, a reticence, an observance of propriety, an absence of vulgarity, combined with a suggestion of profound culture and technical skill and a wealth of underlying feelings of the most creditable kind which would gush forth if the composer had them not so well in hand, which attract the lofty of soul where the less lofty stray to the shrine of our younger and more vigorous actor-managers. But this is mere guess-work. All I know is that once on a winter evening I found the approaches to Langham Place choked with girls' schools. We were to hear the 'Pathétique' Symphony of Tschaikowsky—a sensational and ungentlemanly composition—and I wondered if a great infidelity was in process. But just as I got out my score and prepared to be shocked, I discovered that the programme had been changed, and the C Minor Symphony of Brahms substituted. So we all had an elevating evening,

and were snappy at the Scripture Lesson next morning owing to reaction.

If you really want to know, why not ask Flaviola? I would do it myself, but a certain coldness has crept into my relations with the Ward family.

Live long and happy; and in that thought die.

HENRY.

Monday, 1st October.

TO NIGEL FONTMELL CLARKE, ESQUIRE.

Your Committee have, in accordance with your instructions, attended a Concert consisting mainly of the works of Richard Wagner, a German, now dead, and have the honour to present the following report.

1. Mr. Wagner's music is very loud. He frequently employs brass instruments with the apparent intention of drowning the sound of other instruments, or at least of diverting the attention of the audience from them. Our conclusions on this point are borne out by the exhaustive researches of Herr Levinstein of Düsseldorf, who has recorded a number of performances of all kinds on a phonometer graduated from 0 to 100, the latter corresponding to 12 on Admiral Beaufort's scale. The follow-

ing are the average force-figures given by him for a number of composers :—

Wagner,	89
Tschaikowsky,	75
Beethoven,	60
Mr. Jones, of Pontefract,	59
Schubert,	58
Sir Arthur Sullivan,	55
Schumann,	52
Mendelssohn,	48
Miss Amy Appleblossom	25

2. Mr. Wagner's music is singularly discordant. We have been unable to obtain statistical evidence on this point, but we find our conclusion supported by a number of persons of good taste. It will perhaps be sufficient in this connection to call attention to the Prelude to *Tristan and Isolda*, the first chord of which consists of the notes of F, B, D sharp, and G sharp—a proceeding which appears to your Committee most improper. The natural and pleasing effects which may be obtained by the resolution of the chord of the dominant seventh into that of the tonic are generally absent from Mr. Wagner's works.

3. Mr. Wagner's themes display a remarkable

lack of what may be called melodic quality. Since the conclusion of the Concert, your Committee have been endeavouring to whistle the themes to which they have been listening, but with little success. They attribute this largely to Mr. Wagner's habit of changing his key in the middle of the theme, as in the case of the song rendered by Isolda after the decease of Tristan.

4. Mr. Wagner's moral intentions, so far as your Committee could trace them in the Concert under consideration, appear to be exceedingly dubious. It is true that he insists with considerable emphasis on the doctrine of redemption; but since in his exemplifications of this doctrine the subject of the process is generally a young or middle-aged man, while the redeeming agent is invariably a young unmarried woman, we gravely doubt whether he really envisages the matter from a standpoint which can be called wholly or even preponderantly ethical. We are reluctant to dwell on this painful topic: but we feel bound to call attention to a scene from the beginning of the opera of *Tannhäuser*, which appears to us both musically and dramatically to be in the worst possible taste, and is so utterly alien to the moral and domestic ideals of this country

that we were frankly surprised to hear it in an English concert-hall. The *Ring of the Nibelungen* also contains even more objectionable scenes, but as the persons participating therein purport to be of a divine or quasi-divine character, the example may be less detrimental to the interests of morality.

5. On a dispassionate review of the whole of the concert heard by them, your Committee for a time felt considerable doubt whether the works of Mr. Wagner should be allowed to be performed in public at all. On reconsideration, however, it appears to us that such a measure of absolute prevention would be inadvisable in the present state of public opinion, and would lay its authors open to the charge of violating the traditional principles of liberty so congenial to the spirit of this country. It has further been represented to us that a considerable amount of capital has been embarked in the printing, performance, and reproduction (for the purposes of mechanical instruments) of Mr. Wagner's works: and that a measure of immediate and absolute prevention would cause a disastrous and undeserved financial dislocation in the business side of the musical world.

6. On the other hand, your Committee are

reluctant to permit the unchecked and indiscriminate performance of Mr. Wagner's works to continue in its present form. They have themselves spent a most unpleasant evening, and at its conclusion have little doubt that much of the scepticism, irreverence, disobedience to parents, lack of discipline, love of cigarettes, football matches, and cinematograph entertainments, which all observers agree to be the salient features of the rising generation, are due to the influence of Mr. Wagner. Some measures must therefore be taken to allay, if not to eradicate the evil.

7. We therefore recommend :—

(*a*) That a stringent average maximum of 65 on the Levinstein phonometer scale, or 8 on Admiral Beaufort's scale, be imposed on all performances of Mr. Wagner's works. If necessary, this could be effected by reducing the number of, or entirely dispensing with, the brass instruments.

(*b*) That the chords to be employed in the accompaniment should be limited to those mentioned in standard works on harmony, and that wherever possible the chords of the dominant, sub-dominant, and tonic should be employed, successively and not contemporaneously.

(*c*) That a selection of melodious tunes, each in a single key, should be prepared, being either composed for the purpose or appropriated from non-copyright works of a suitable kind, and that these should be substituted for Mr. Wagner's themes. Provided that the selection embraces a sufficient variety both of rhythms and of lengths of tunes, this should not be a matter of any difficulty.

(*d*) That the stories employed by Mr. Wagner as plots should be rearranged so as to enable all female agents engaged in the process of redemption of a male subject to be married to that subject before the commencement of the process.

(*e*) That the opening scene of *Tannhäuser* should be entirely reconstructed.

We remain, Sir,

Your obedient servants,

HENRY.

Tuesday, 2nd October.

DEAR NIGEL,

I am badly overstrained with the task of writing about concerts, and can only set down a few things badly.

'Till Eulenspiegel' is great — brilliantly conceived and carried out masterwise. All

symphonies look stiff and square beside it, with their antic ritual of statement and restatement and solid, solemn dissection. The 'Till' themes grow and sprout like green things in a forest, caring not one damson-stone for logical development. Strauss makes even Wagner seem a pedant and bungler. And what a wit the man has—the creative wit that goes with a clear head and a jocund soul. To have done such wonders of technique, to carry the skill of the centuries at his fingers' ends, and never to be a bore!

The end is charming—just a slight broadening of the style to hint at regret and wave a farewell, without sentiment and without slop, to the immortal Till. I am purged of much heaviness by to-night's hearing.

No one else could live with Strauss, though some of them have obviously been gleaning behind his reaping. As for Wagner's Kaisermarsch—don't name it, dearie, or I shall forget I was brought up a lady. Any bandmaster could have done it on a quart of stout.

In a secluded corner of the hall I observed the fated Harrison, wilting visibly under Strauss, and the burden of living. He addressed me

afterwards with opprobrious words, but I plied the poor boy with liquor, and deluded him with false hopes about the thematic content of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, which weighed upon him strangely. He left me without thanks, but rejuvenated.

And now one question. Whose uncle presented this ticket, with its burden of reporting, yours or mine? Occasional writing is tolerable: perpetual writing is *adagio lamentoso*. I am foredone, and can see no aid. Harrison, when not in liquor, wilts: the red-haired sisterhood view me distantly: no one else is in town. Return, recreant, return. This is the last word of

HENRY.

Wednesday, 3rd October.

I return, like a giant refreshed, to find Piano Concertos in the ascendant. We have been short of them so far, and are now going to make up time. To-night we had Tschaikowsky in B Flat Minor: on Friday there is a Mozart: next week Schumann, Saint-Saëns and Beethoven's Fourth: and later on the magnificent Fifth.

The Tschaikowsky makes a very good beginning to this revelry. It is not in the least the final utterance of art, following on centuries

of research into the possibilities of the piano concerto : on the contrary, it is a good, simple, slap-dash piece of work, which every one can understand and most people (in their heart of hearts) enjoy very much. There is nothing fugitive or elusive about it : the tunes have a strong natural taste of their own, and need a robust stomach rather than a delicate palate. The result is an exciting, if not elevating, experience for the hearer, and a first-class evening out for the piano.

I am sure that pianists enjoy playing this work. The first theme has a valiant swagger about it, like a flight of Shakespearean rhetoric : it is hurled out with fine self-confidence and an immediate infallible appeal to popular instinct. Just as any good speaker will inevitably let himself go when he comes to phrases like :—

> 'Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
> Like a Colossus,'

so any pianist, however refined, instinctively revels in this theme, and bangs out the terrific chords with both hands, exulting. It is a vulgar tune, but a good one. An ingenious critic once invented the theory that Tschaikowsky wrote vulgar tunes by accident : he was so remote and detached from ordinary life, that

he evolved for himself rhythms and turns of phrase which every street-boy was whistling and other musicians had known all about for years. In the same way, a scholarly recluse, selecting for himself the exact words to express his meaning at the beginning of a speech, might choose 'Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking.' This is an attractive theory, and sets one reflecting on the meaning of vulgarity: but as regards this particular tune I cannot help thinking that Tschaikowsky had a pretty good idea of what the public liked, and was delighted to be able to agree with them.

Of course, before the Concerto is over he does one or two characteristic and unmistakable things. The Blue Devils get loose here and there in the first movement—notably in some horrible chord-transitions, which suggest that everything has gone suddenly, utterly, and irrevocably wrong, and make us wonder what has happened to the robustious tune aforesaid. Even more characteristic is the beginning of the slow movement, where the flute sings a lovely little tune aloft in the blue. In his vulgarest moments, Tschaikowsky is always ready to become suddenly inspired.

After this it was very pleasant to hear, in

place of the normal operatic agony, some good songs. 'Mein Schwan, mein stiller,' orchestrated with a liberal use of the harp, maketh the heart of the hearer to expand. It is a most beautiful poem, and meets its affinity in the music.

The G Minor Symphony of Mozart is not to be criticised: it stands secure above all criticism. If any one frames a definition of good music, the only question is, 'Does the definition cover the G Minor?' If it does not, you need not worry further.

If you resent this *ex-cathedra* judgment, I can only say, 'Listen to the slow movement.' Is there anything else created by man in this imperfect world to touch it? The first statement of the theme, with the strings entering one above the other, and the successive swoops down to B and A natural against the soft E flat of the horns, is wonder enough. But this is only the beginning. On the repeat the violins soar away above, revealing new splendours in the firmament; and there follows all the delicious interplay of demi-semi-quavers skipping up and down the scale, with the strong measure of the theme proceeding gravely underneath. The final miracle comes—in the usual place for miracles—at the end of the working out, where

a little dialogue of four bars between flute and oboe marks, once and for ever, the furthest reach of human imagination, the supreme yearning after perfection.

The Symphony settles some questions which otherwise might vex us. We know now what music is played in heaven: we know, also, as a subsidiary point, that clarinets are not employed there. In our terrestrial rough-and tumble we need clarinets at times, just as we need trombones: but in heaven they are not wanted. Some of the ineffable lightness and grace of the G Minor is undoubtedly due (humanly speaking) to the absence of clarinets. The rest is due to another cause—namely, pure genius.

Thursday, 4th October.

Is a man permitted to enjoy Debussy without arguing? I know nothing of the rules of harmony, and nothing of the abstract merits of the whole-tone scale, except that I can whistle it, which is more than some people can do. I have no notion of what the modern technical innovations of the French composers really are. Is such a person allowed to say, quite honestly, that he enjoyed 'L'Après-Midi d'un Faune' very much?

It is strange stuff, of course, quite unlike

anything else ; but so is most good music. It is dreamy, but definite ; odd, but beautiful ; delicate, but strong ; it arrests the attention while seeming to allow it to wander at will. The slumber-song of the horn is bewitching, and almost recalled to my mind an exceedingly trite and *démodé* quotation about the horns of elf-land faintly blowing. But the whole thing is substantial. A recent critic, in denouncing modern art and literature (this hint of course enables you to identify him) has said that much modern work has to be regarded from one single and very particular point of view to make its effect : from any other point of view it is simply ridiculous (*e.g.* Maeterlinck, Aubrey Beardsley, and the *Yellow Book passim*). Ancient art, on the other hand, you can walk all round and find substantial from every point of the compass. This criticism certainly does not apply to Debussy. He is solid, for all his delicacy. You can walk all round him without losing the spell at any point. So being quite comfortable about this, we Promenaders are ready to receive anything the experts like to tell us about the whole-tone scale and developments in tonality. We always like hearing experts talk, if we can hear the music first.

We were well prepared for the magic glade where the Faun took his siesta by the *Freischütz* overture, which came first. It is a joyous work, full of pine-forests, and nice young men in tights, and romantic heroinism, and jolly Infernal Powers (contrasting strongly with the very unpleasant Infernal Powers who bellow through the brass of Berlioz). German Romanticism is like German beer—cheerful and nourishing, and the more you take the better you feel. *Der Freischütz* is just what an opera ought to be, and what it generally was until Wagner came along, pirating Weber's orchestration and substituting ponderous moral ideas for his innocent and picturesque gaieties. The overture is one of the most gracious and enlivening of Promenade experiences.

There was plenty more cheerful noise tonight, including Coleridge-Taylor's Ballade in A Minor, and the good old '1812.' I had not heard it for more than a month, and was pleased to find it in excellent health and spirits. We shall meet again shortly, no doubt.

Friday, 5th October.

The family party was a great success. Gilbert, on being introduced, at once informed me

that he didn't know much about music, but liked it: and that 'we' hope to hear *Tristan* very soon. This magnificent opening instantly disarmed all opposition, and we settled down comfortably to a capital programme. 'The Dedication of the House' was an appropriate beginning: a long and delightful Mozart Concerto put us all on good terms with ourselves; the Rondino for Wind instruments led us into further raptures: and finally everything else was obliterated and knocked into a cocked hat by the Seventh Symphony.

Beethoven himself made the only really satisfying description of this work when he called it 'meine grosse Symphonie.' I could write a sermon on the text of these three words. It is the work most characteristic of Beethoven, most emphatically 'mein.' It is great, even among his masterpieces, towering above them all. It is the culmination of the Symphony as a form of art. Other symphonies fall away in parts, lose interest, and only recapture the highest level by a *tour de force*, like repeating the Scherzo theme or introducing voices. The Seventh goes on its way secure and strong, with never a shadow of weakening from the first note to the last, and with no tricks of any

kind. (The double repeat in the Scherzo is unusual, but has a good precedent; and who minds how often a thing like this is repeated?)

My sermon would then fall under six main heads: firstly, the Introduction: secondly, the Vivace; thirdly, the slow movement; fourthly, the Scherzo; fifthly, the Finale; and sixthly, How jolly good it all is. They are all very sound points, but they take rather long, so I will suppress the full text.

The Introduction always suggests to me the transition from thought to action; the long-held, meditative chords are stirred by the tremendous staccato runs of the strings from the depths up to the heights: the charming little song of the wood-wind is like a reveille, and its last repeat (very soft on the fiddles) finally rouses the sleeping giant of the Vivace. It is like the wind of dawn calling a man afield out of his dreams: he stretches himself, paces to and fro awhile (on the note of E), and then strides away as the great theme gets loose.

Some people pursue this metaphor through the ensuing movement, with the dotted tribrach marking the stride, and they will tell you exactly where the wind blows and where it lulls and what sort of a day it is. Others think of the

movement as a dance ; others, more cautious, simply say that it is the embodiment of romance. It matters little : you can fit almost any joyous and rhythmic activity to this tune—anything that is buoyant and supple and elastic and high-mettled, any mood in which a man faces the world at his best and in tune with circumstance.

The second movement is cast in the opposite extreme of emotion—when circumstance has done its worst and the blow has fallen. There is no doubt about the passionate, personal note of grief and desolation in this solemn chant : you hear it particularly in the under-theme which gradually works its way through. (Most conductors, by the way, let it come through too soon.) It is the 'Eroica' funeral march over again—grief striving against consolation—but more profoundly felt and more sincerely presented. The last transition to the first theme is pure tragedy—simple and searching as a phrase of Vergil.

Then, Presto, ♩. = 132—the swiftest, most brilliant, and most joyous of all Scherzos (or Scherzi), with 'thrust and parry in bright monostich' between strings and wind, and incredible gaucheries (suddenly melting into poetry)

for the horn. It ends with an elemental joke of the kind which only really great men conceive.

The task of the Finale is to add a climax to all this. It succeeds. Without any *tours de force* (I mean, tricks), by simply unchaining a wild horde of spirits that Beethoven had still in reserve, it piles Pelion on Ossa, and brings the great Symphony through to its close without a trace of faltering. Some people think of it as a drunken revel, and can mark (in the second theme) the exact point at which the long line of good fellows, having succeeded in linking arms, go lurching down the street. But surely some draught more ethereal than human alcohol inspired this movement : it is the drunkenness of gods, which passes without a break into the magnificent solemnity of the Coda, with the revel over-awed and over-mastered as the basses settle down, down to the long-held chords of the wind. Search where you will in any art, there is nothing greater than this moment.

As regards my sixth point, I need only add that on adjourning to the cake-shop afterwards we all agreed that the Symphony was splendid, and then proceeded at once to discuss other topics. Gilbert and Rhoda reverted to the subject of *Tristan*. Well, all comparisons are

absurd, and *Tristan* is a noble work ; but when people speak of it in the same breath as the Seventh Symphony, I can only diagnose subjective illusion, due to temporary and non-recurring causes. I am cutting my sermon short : (the full text is very eloquent on this point) : so I will only say here that the Symphony has a wider sweep than *Tristan*. It contemplates a cosmos of more than two, a world bigger than that revealed by the flash of a single emotion. Therefore it remains substantial, while the shadows flee away. I am quoting from the tenth book of the *Odyssey*, and not from the Song of Solomon.

Saturday, October 6th.

My dear Nigel,

Very jolly concert, thanks.

We started with the *Flying Dutchman* overture, which I still like, though it strikes me as artificial compared with W.'s later work. Perhaps 'artificial' isn't quite the word, but what I mean is this. A lot of it is simply noise put in to imitate the sea and so forth,—very jolly, but only noise and not *meaning* anything ; whereas in W.'s later works, even if there's the dickens of a noise going on (which there

generally is), it is mostly made up of bits of *motifs* which *mean something*—that is, if you know them, which I don't: but I understand it is so. What sounds like a shareholders' meeting moving an amendment is really a combination of Siegfried's youth and several love affairs and somebody's spear and a serpent and the redemption of mankind—*i.e.* a lot of ideas which are in W.'s mind at the time. So in a way it all develops naturally—though of course he chooses *what* bits to put in, and in what key: whereas in the *Fl. D.* it's *merely* noise.

Then we had Santuzza's Aria from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. I saw this once, but have forgotten it all bar the Intermezzo: but I seem to remember that the story was pretty average drivel.

The Three Dances from *Henry VIII.* were very pretty. I know one of them well, and used to be able to play it on the tin-whistle. The dances are rather like the Pastoral Symphony—the one in the Messiah, I mean, not the one in Beethoven.

Then we had the Peer Gynt Suite by Grieg. I like this much better than the Piano Concerto by the same; it hasn't got a cadenza. The first bit is rather like a folk-song—quite simple

and naïve, and means exactly what it says, which they call certainty of emotional precision, I believe. I thought the thing (P. G.) itself was a folk-story, but Bill told me it was a play by Ibsen, who did not take many shares in folk-stories, I should say, judging from a play of his I read (*When We Dead Awaken*—absolutely the limit).

Then a man sang 'Ho, Jolly Jenkin,' which I used to like, but which now seems a bit thin. Man had a good, cheerful, loud voice, and looked as if he could tell the difference between beer and barley-water without the help of the Public Analyst (not mine, I may say).

There was a good deal more, but this ought to do for you. By the way, Henry tells me that the themes in the Mendelssohn Concerto are mostly Croatian folk-tunes, so I can now face the music with Miss W. (Joke not intentional.)

Yours,

J. R. Harrison.

Monday, 8th October.

Dear Sir,

I am greatly obliged for the ticket which you kindly gave me, and which I return here-

with. The concert was very nice. I think there was a mistake on the programme, as No. 3 was put down as the *Faust* overture, which I have often heard L.C.C. bands play, and the piece played was quite different. A gentleman and lady sang very well, but the band played the accompaniment so loud that they had to sing very hard.

I liked specially a piece called the 'Ride of the Valkyries,' which I have often heard on a piano-player at a friend's house. It sounded different on the band, but the tunes were the same.

There was a great crowd and a gentleman had a fit on the floor just near me. Two firemen came in and carried him outside, and I saw him later smoking a cigar in the interval, so I do not think he was very ill.

The papers you were waiting for came in before I left, and I looked them through. I think it is only a try on, but will tell you about it to-morrow.

With renewed thanks, I am,

Your obt. servt.

R. Thos. Lane.

1 enclosure.

Tuesday, 9th October.

DEAR MR. CLARKE,

It was extremely kind of you to send me the ticket for to-night. I was unable to stay to the end, but Promenade programmes are a Gargantuan feast, and a small fraction of them forms a good meal.

I was glad to hear Strauss's 'Don Quixote' again. It is a marvellously clever work: indeed the technical aspect intrigues one so much that one is distracted from the melodic content. But, essentially, Strauss seems to me to be in a blind alley: his material is second-hand, derived from his unique store of musical culture, and not direct from the true source of music. 'Don Quixote' is witty comment on a story which is in itself a criticism on a departed civilisation—it is satire upon satire, at a double remove from the fountain of spontaneous creation.

A much more pleasing item was the 'Dream Pantomime' from *Hänsel and Gretel*—delicate and limited, but within its limits authentic. For myself, I always hear operatic excerpts in the concert-room with reservations: I cannot dismiss the background of the theatre.

'Hiawatha's Vision' is also an enlivening work, though I have doubts of the real validity

of negro music. Can a slave tradition, titivated with Americanisms, be a really valid utterance? Coleridge-Taylor really uses it at second-hand, and Dvořàk, in his 'New World' Symphony, more conspicuously so.

I have made the acquaintance of Rhoda's fiancé, and like him exceedingly. His musical predilections appear to run in the direction of Wagner, but no doubt Rhoda will direct him to the shrine of Brahms. He has promised to obtain for me the words of an old song which he says his father's gardener knows; it may prove an interesting variant.

Sincerely yours,

DELIA WARD.

Wednesday, 10th October.

Why is Tschaikowsky's 'Pathétique' Symphony so popular? I ask this not as a superior person about other people, but as one of the mob about myself. The 'Pathétique' is popular with *me*: I hear it often and with joy: I am one of ten thousand that do likewise. What is our reason? It is no trivial question. The 'Pathétique' was composed when I was ten years old: it was first performed in this country when I was about sixteen: now when I am

(dear me! under thirty-six) it is an established classic. In less than twenty years it has passed into the abiding framework of our musical experience. Why?

No doubt it was well boomed, and this counts for something. We were ready for novelty, and the idea of Russian music was attractive. Further, the symphony has a good title. We all like pathos: and though if an Englishman openly called his work pathetic, we should suspect him of irony, when a Russian uses the French form of the word we are quite comfortable. Some of us know that Beethoven wrote a most magical sonata under this title: while others remember the Greek sense of the word—emotional, passionate, the exact opposite of apathetic. There is no better description of this symphony.

But these are trifles. The real causes of its popularity lie deeper, but are not obscure. The first, obvious point is the extraordinary clearness of the whole work—the distinct, indelible impression made by each movement and by each element within each movement. The seven main themes simply hit you in the eye: I need not enumerate them beyond saying that I reckon the third movement as a riot, one big marching

theme, and a continuation. And these seven, with some subsidiary matter in the first and third movements, some magnificent utterances for the brass, and a noble lamentation for the bassoon in the Finale, practically make up the whole. I am not arguing (at present) that they are good themes or bad themes : I only say that they are impossible to mistake : they jump out at you like live things, and you never have the faintest doubt which of them is at work.

Similarly with the four movements. They are like the four seasons of the year : you need never stop to think which you are in. They are as distinct in quality as music can be. And this without the aid of objective suggestion. There is really very little 'programme' in the narrower sense. They talk of a peasants' dance in the second movement : and of the pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war in the third movement ; but even this amount of objectification is quite unauthorised and quite unnecessary. The contrast of mood is so strong and so clear that 'programme' becomes superfluous. The moment a bar sounds we know where we are—in the struggle between passion and resignation, in an attempted gaiety borne down by grave foreboding, in the frenzy of

collective excitement, in final lamentation and despair. And if you say that this is not confined to the 'Pathétique,' but holds good with any familiar work, will you kindly tell me instantly, on the spur of the moment, and without reflection, what happens in the Trio of Beethoven's Seventh and Ninth, what is the second theme of the Finale of the Fifth, what the slow movement of Brahms' Second is like, and will you whistle any bar from the Scherzo of Dvořák's 'New World' Symphony or Schubert's Seventh, or even from the finale of the G Minor? You may be able to do it: but you will need quite a different kind of effort from remembering any of the 'Pathétique' movements.

Now for the real question. Is this due to vulgarity of content and sensationalism of presentation, or is it due to real musical potency? Well, there are certainly some tricks in the 'Pathétique.' To start very slow and very soft in the lowest octave of the bassoon is a trick: to make the same theme—cut up and accelerated—the storm-centre of the first movement is a trick: to drop in two pages from a riot (♩ = 132) to Andante (♩ = 69) with fiddles *con sordini* (*teneramente*, *molto cantabile*, *con espansione*) is—shall we say?—an emphatic way of making

a contrast. To make your bassoon die away with *six p*'s *ritardando molto*, and in the next bar to let the whole orchestra loose *fortissimo* and *allegro vivo*, at least leaves no doubt of your intention. And $\frac{5}{4}$ is a good idea to attract the attention of the public ; and to divide your theme between the fiddles, so that they see-saw, is a novelty and has completely taken in critics ere now. The catalogue might be continued.

But are they merely tricks ? Does Tschaikowsky hurl these effects at you to disguise the absence of music or to announce its presence ? I can only record a personal view. A few of the tricks—notably the see-saw—seem to me immaterial : but all the rest—the whole scheme of contrasts—is beyond question of the essence of the 'Pathétique,' a natural, almost inevitable, consequence of the thing which Tschaikowsky had to utter. He did not start on the bassoon because it arrested attention : the thing which he felt—the dark brooding fate which menaced human happiness—*was* the bassoon theme ; he expressed himself through the bassoon as a man expresses himself through his arms and legs. He did not put the second movement in $\frac{5}{4}$ because it was a new and ingenious rhythm : he called on his soul for the answer to the first

movement and his soul gave answer in $\frac{5}{4}$ time. You might as well say that Vergil was first of all struck with the brilliant idea of writing a half-line and then composed 'Numina magna deum' to startle his audience: or that Shakespeare, having heard about inversion of stresses from a Professor of English Literature, then sat down to write:

'She's like a liar gone to burning Hell.'

This is the real reason why we Promenaders like the 'Pathétique.' It rings true. The man works outwards from an idea. The ingenuities and decorations, of which there are many, are organic outgrowths of a central mood, not stucco plastered on. The sensationalism and violence of contrast is the natural exaggeration of a man at full stretch, not a trick to arrest attention. It is a real passion which crashes brutally across the dying wail of the clarinet; a real excitement—hectic and fever-flushed—which calls to its aid the collective pomp of human organisation to drown misgiving; a real despair which, when the tumult and the shouting dies, recoils on itself, hurls the last defiance at fate, and sings the elegy over hope and youth and joy.

As to orchestration, the layman must be humble : but it does seem to me that in the main business of orchestration—that is, in using the orchestra to good purpose—this symphony is supreme. The big effects in the first movement are really terrific, with the brass crashing relentlessly through the storming of the strings ; and the last climax—just before the repeat of the second theme—where the fiddles scream in the highest register (*largamente forte possibile*) and the trombones deliver six superb sentences underneath, is an unforgettable experience. One feels that the trombones are really saying something : they are voices and not instruments. The interplay between strings and wind in the slow movement is also most happily managed, and all the second strain, with the soft, reiterated menace of the drum under the uneasy song of the fiddles, is a study in orchestral foreboding. The bassoon passage in the Finale, leading in the second theme, is also a miracle—sinking right down its scale and dying away, to give place to the agitated mutter of the horns over which the violins sing their beautiful song.

For those who have the score there is an added joy in the titles. ' Incalzando ' ' feroce ' ' affrettando ' ' saltando ' ' con dolcezza e flebile '

'con tenerezza e devozione'—it makes most interesting reading. But the most splendid title of all is that of the last movement. 'Adagio Lamentoso'—can't you hear it? What a lot our language misses by the clipped and oxytone 'lament'! Even 'lamentation' is a mere shadow beside the full roll of the Latin tongues —the ineffable melody that sounds in 'lamentabile regnum.'

Thursday, 11th October.

Three cheers for the 'Hebrides' overture! It is a most inspiriting piece of music, and I don't care twopence if the sentiment is a trifle second-hand, as my friends tell me. After our soul-agonies of last night, it is pleasant to get some evidence in favour of this world: and there is no better evidence than the 'Hebrides' overture. Here at least was a man who loved music, and loved writing it, and wrote this particular piece with joy, and did it just as well as he could. If you tell me that he was a rich and successful Jew, I reply that it is quite irrelevant, and that it is rude to make personal remarks. Why should it be assumed that genuine music can only be written by agonised Russians or unpopular Gentiles?

Another gentleman later on in the programme had also been trying the same theme: but had evidently been overcome with philosophic doubt about the sea, and groped after his themes through a most marvellous complex of orches tration. But the sea is only salt-water acted upon by simple physical causes: and it is much better to take it as it comes, like Mendelssohn, and if you enjoy it to say so.

For the rest we went on orthodox lines—'Voi che Sapete,' Handel's Largo, 'Casse Noisette' suite and so forth—a very pleasant programme, with just a reminder of our mortality in the shape of the 'Trauermarsch.' The most striking thing about the whole was that it occurred on Thursday, which is supposed to be one of the evenings dedicated to the weaker brethren. How jolly cultured we are getting, to be sure!

The orchestra, as usual, took the whole programme in its stride, jumping from Mozart to the twentieth century and back to Wagner through Tschaikowsky without a trace of faltering. I believe this orchestra could play the G Minor and 'Tod und Verklärung' in alternate bars, keeping perfect time, and getting just the right atmosphere in each. True, they are growing

a trifle tired as time goes on, but they generally come again in surprising form towards the ninth week. And all for a shilling a night, my dear fellow Promenaders !

Friday, 12th October.

A programme waved from above indicating the presence of Rhoda and Gilbert, and it was clear that Gilbert's higher education was beginning with the Brahms Violin Concerto. It is tough work, and he has my sympathy. Personally I always find, as elsewhere in Brahms, that after ten bars or so I say to myself 'Come, now, this is absolutely splendid'; and after fifty bars I say 'I am sure something magnificent is coming soon'; and after a hundred and fifty bars my attention begins to wander and I begin to think of what the orchestra is doing and when the end is coming. I do not expect this confession to inspire sympathy or even respect: but it is true none the less.

Anyhow the Concerto is not in the same street with the Eighth Symphony. You feel at once that Beethoven is the better man with one hand tied behind his back. It is not a bad metaphor: in this particular symphony one hand—the one which stirred the deeps and

wielded the thunderbolt—*was* tied behind his back. But the other hand was surprisingly vigorous. It wrote music : it made jokes : it snapped its fingers at dulness and inertia and orthodox rules. It produced, in short, the Eighth Symphony, a work of small dimensions and restricted scope, but a permanent source of joy.

The symphony is supposed to illustrate Beethoven's love for rough humour ; but in fact only a few of the jokes are at all violent. There is the explosion of C sharp in the Finale, but this is really a rather abstruse and subtle joke, as it becomes D flat later on and leads in a harmonic change, appreciable only by experts, but very jolly for us all. The octave figure on the low strings in the first movement is also a little abrupt at first, but this is merely in its capacity as a foil to the main subject, and the struggle between the two is so delightful and so truly comic that one forgives it as one forgives a Shakespearean buffoon. Otherwise the humour of the symphony—and there is plenty of it—is of the most delicate order. The Allegretto is all of a smile and a twinkle ; it trips about like a demure heroine of comedy, and the banal ending which so pains Sir George Grove is simply the happy marriage with which the comedian bundles his

heroine off the stage. The two bars which lead in the minuet—with their stresses carefully misplaced so as to suggest a man jumping off the wrong foot—set exactly the tone of happy irresponsibility which this most jovial movement demands. Near the end of the first section it seems for a while as if some development is going to set in : but the trumpets and horns loudly decline to be bothered, and shout a doxology together in defiance of all intellectualism. The horns then have some fun by themselves, and so back to the repeat.

The Finale is more of a mixture, and now and then the tied hand tries to get loose—notably in the long mysterious phrases in minims which slide up and down in the section following the third repeat ; but even these hurry themselves up towards the end, and join in the general uproar which is proceeding. The second theme also melts miraculously into poetry at the end, but it is a good theme and does plenty of ordinary work as well. I need not remark on the drums : whenever there is fun going you conjecture that the drums will be in it, and when you find them tuned in octaves you are quite certain of it. It is a sublime joke, though a delicate one, when it comes.

I forgathered with Rhoda and Gilbert afterwards, and fed them at the cake-shop. They have been undergoing joint inspections by relatives all the week, and looked absolutely fagged out. It is a monstrous tyranny, but one understands how it was that the endogamic tribes declined, while the exogamic, being of sterner stuff, survived. Whether the other party's relatives went for you with axes, or whether they merely ask you out to dinner and criticise you behind your back, the principle is the same. It is a useful discipline. But it does not make people able to appreciate the Eighth Symphony. So I forebore to ask them how keenly they had enjoyed the Brahms, and merely saw to it that they ate and drank adequately. I think I am the only one of Rhoda's relatives that Gilbert likes at all at the present moment.

Saturday, 13th October.

DEAR SIR,

After you left to-day Mr. Lane was telephoned about a meeting to-night and gave me your Ticket and asked me to send it you back. I was very thankful, and greatly enjoyed the Concert, both the singing and the playing. I saw very well, and they played a March our

band played in our camp last month. They allow smoking, and it was very pleasant. I am sending the ticket back as Mr. Lane said, and I thank you very much.

Yours obediently,

S. ROBERTS.

Monday, 15th October.

A good orthodox Wagner programme—*Tannhäuser* Prelude with Wagner's close, the *Tristan* Prelude and Liebestod, Senta's Song, a lot of the Third Act of the *Meistersinger*, the Good Friday music, some *Lohengrin*, the Walkürenritt, Wotan's Abschied, Huldigungsmarsch and so forth. Monday programmes always repeat themselves once in the ten weeks, and as there are two forms of the *Tristan* Prelude and two of the *Tannhäuser*, one gets them both four times for certain, apart from casual occurrences elsewhere. But the more the merrier as far as I am concerned. I am always ready to hear the *Tannhäuser*, particularly in this version with the final triumphant descent down the scale: it leaves no doubt about the victory of the Pilgrims' March, which is both musically and melodramatically right. As for *Tristan*—continuez: one cannot hear it too often.

I suppose I ought not to talk about Wotan's Abschied. I have never seen it on the stage, and consequently I can only give the bloodless, theoretical views of the mere concert-goer, whom all proper Wagnerians despise. Pending the momentous day when I shall actually view with these eyes the supers igniting a stage-fire under the property-pyre which sustains a recumbent Fraülein, I submit with great modesty the view that the whole scene is a most magnificent and stirring creation, vivid and picturesque, but always dramatically right, with the farewell of Wotan, and the hints of Siegfried's advent dominating the purely pictorial element, such as the flicker of the flames which melts so beautifully into the sleep *motif*. Dramatically the scene is—I mean, must be to those who have seen it—a wonderful blend of past, present, and future, of memory and anticipation : musically, it hits exactly the mood of ending a phase, and looking forward to the next. The strange, descending chords hang a mysterious veil between us and what is gone before : the call of the horn stirs the blood with a foretaste of what is to come. But I dare say this is all wrong, and that it is all quite different on the stage.

Anyhow, the surprising thing is that this is

only one excerpt from one opera, and that there are nine more, not counting *Rienzi*. What a stupendous mass to have created! It is all very well to denounce the nineteenth century as a dull and utilitarian period, reeling backwards by the negative movements of thought into an uneasy scepticism; only, when you come to look at the facts, it wasn't dull, and didn't reel backwards, and produced enough affirmation to occupy several successive centuries in denying it. Possibly Wagner thought at times that he was upsetting everything, and being the devil of a fellow in the way of negation: but in fact he was continually hurling forth masses of music, every bar of which asserted in the most ringing and positive tones that life was interesting, and man was a fine fellow, and woman something quite unutterable, and demanding wood-wind. It is really no good asking us to believe that the century was a regrettable aberration, and then playing to us the *Meistersinger* overture.

And it all happened so recently! Within the lifetime of some yet living this music was not. In less than a century it has become a musical mythology—something behind the first beginnings of our musical experience, which gives colour and shape to all the rest. Can it

really be true that Siegfried existed in men's minds before his horn-phrase, that the tragic love of Tristan and Isolda ever worked itself out to its conclusion without those wondrous chords, that the Flying Dutchman ever sailed the seas unheralded by the surge of the violins? Wagner's music has captured for ever whole regions of our mythological background: it is become like Homer and Malory and the Second Book of Samuel and Jack the Giant-Killer and the Sleeping Beauty. It is, in short, folk-music; only don't tell Flavia I said so.

I really must go and see some of his operas soon. I wish they did not start so early. That is the worst of Wagner. He had such a lot to say, and said it all.

Tuesday, 16th October.

The pressure of overdue Concertos is so great that Schumann to-night invaded the precincts of Tuesday, generally sacred to the moderns. But the Schumann Concerto, like the perfect lady, is at home anywhere. Henry calls it chamber-music, and professes to despise it: but why should the poor piano be always fighting for its life against an insurgent orchestra in full blast? A Pianoforte Concerto is a Concerto for

the Pianoforte ; and I like to hear the instrument at its ease, with the orchestra as obedient subordinates and supporters. If you want a death-struggle, you can wait for the ' Emperor ' on Friday week. To-night we had balmy peace, with the piano in unquestioned command.

Schumann is one of the people who get badly treated in these concerts. I suppose, as Henry says, he was not much of an orchestrator, and we have no room for pure piano-pieces or (apparently) for really good songs. Consequently we only get the ' Traümerei ' from time to time—and that in an orchestrated version : the Concerto now and then ; and very rarely a symphony. It is a pity, because he was a good man and a poet—an unusual combination.

I am still unable to grasp the passage written in three-time, which is really in two-time, and to look at the beat makes me sick. But, heard with shut eyes, it is very pleasant, like all the rest of this work.

Nineteen letters await me, and I have no time to write about the rest.

Wednesday, 17th October.

I am thinking over my sins with all the deadly clearness of the morning after an overdose of

raw brandy in a heated atmosphere. It was exciting while it lasted, and revealed the depths as well as the heights : but now I wonder why I did it, and long passionately for some one to come and tell me that it is not as bad as it seems. This, I need not say, is the effect of Tschaikowsky —the F Minor Symphony—the crudest, cruellest, ugliest, and in some ways the strongest and best of his works. It is not so popular as the Fifth or Sixth, but it is much in the same mood, with additional clearness and vigour : it says all the nasty things they say, and fewer of the nice ones : it is politics where they are philosophy—combative, pugnacious, self-possessed and thoroughly disconcerting. Why on earth do we go and listen to things like this, when there are lots of amiable gentlemen ready to soothe us with pretty tunes temperately orchestrated ?

The symphony is on the usual plan, beginning with a motto theme stated with deadly and menacing clearness, which reappears from time to time to crush out any attempts after geniality. The first theme is rather like that of the Fifth, but the difference of measure ($\frac{9}{8}$ as against $\frac{6}{8}$) gives it an extra dose of vigour : it steps over its long bars like an athlete. The theme easily dominates the first movement : there is no

melodic relief such as we have in the Fifth and Sixth. The second theme is merely an interlude of agility for the wood-wind, and the first theme easily recaptures the field and remains in command to the end—sinewy, strong, and generally baleful and upsetting.

The Scherzo is an audacious and successful trick. Bows are laid aside altogether, and we have simply a collective banjo played by the strings, alternating with a game for the wind. It is a neat and dexterous performance, but not at all soothing: it suggests something sub-human and almost animal—the scurry of rats over the floor, or malicious gnomes at some unhallowed revel.

The Finale is even more disheartening. It starts with a shout of triumph, as if everything were all right, and having announced this, stops dead, and breaks into the most melancholy little misery of a tune, like the song of a lost child or a mentally defective. Chilled to the bone, we resort for comfort to the triumph song, but this speedily becomes hectic and unnatural in its gaiety, and is crushed by the motto theme, and we are sent home to bed disconsolate.

The only relief in the whole symphony is given by the really charming song of the oboe

in the slow movement, which is plaintive but not gloomy, and at least sounds human. It is sung at full length many times, after the excellent practice of slow movements, and at the end is left, according to the composer's custom, to die away alone.

But on the whole I repeat my question—why do we listen to things like this? Why do we submit ourselves to distress and torture of the mind when we might be playing billiards or going to the theatre or attending delightful social entertainments? The answer is that Art does not aim at Pleasure but at the Amplification of Life: that Sorrow and Grief and Unrest, conjured up in the mood through which music operates, Amplify Life, whereas billiards merely diversifies it, and the theatre misrepresents it, and social entertainments shorten it. Briefly, it is better to drink raw brandy with Tschaikowsky, than lemonade with Mendelssohn or weak tea with—hush! I nearly said it.

Thursday, 18th October.

MY DEAR NIGEL,

I have been thinking over the things I have written to you about the Concerts when I have had the ticket, and have come to the conclusion

that it is all rather rot. I don't mean my things only—they would probably be rot anyhow—but all descriptions of music. It's easy enough to gas in the way the programmes do, about joy and sorrow and emotion and passion and so forth, and if you get this sort of thing into your mind in advance you can think you hear it in the music. But do you really? Supposing I say a bit of music is *not* emotional and you say it is, can we *prove* it either way? It's not like pictures or poetry: if you said *Paradise Lost* was frivolous or a picture by Phil May religious, I could *prove* you were an ass, logically, so to speak. But you can't *prove*—*e.g.* that the *Flying Dutchman* overture is *not* like (say) a picnic or the Third ('Eroica') Symphony of Beethoven *is* like Napoleon. It seems to me that a lot of the talk about music is really hot air: and people partly don't really believe it, and partly only believe it because somebody else has got in first and said it.

Take to-night's programme, for example. It was quite good fun and I liked it, especially a thing called 'Finlandia' by Delius, and parts of the Liszt Concerto. But can I really honestly say more than that I liked it? If I say that the Liszt was emotional, or dignified, or any-

thing like that, wouldn't it really be *my imagination*? Of course music by being merely quick or slow, or loud or soft, may *suggest* things—*e.g.* excitement, if it's quick : but that is merely because if *people* are excited they do and say things quickly. The tune *itself* isn't necessarily excited : we only *think* so.

This may be all bilge : but anyhow just at present I don't feel inclined to describe the programme any more. As I say, it was quite jolly : and that's the best criticism I can make, and, I believe, the only one one *ought* to make.

By the way, I met your cousin and her fiancé the other night, and Miss Ward with them, and we had it out about the Mendelssohn Concerto. I told her exactly what happened and exactly what I thought : I said the M. was jolly good and I didn't care a dam whether it was folk-song or not. She tried to argue me down, but I stuck to my guns, thinking that as I was in for it I had better go through with it. Your cousin didn't join in much, but Wharton came in on my side, only he seemed to have mucked up the Concerto with the Songs without Words. In the end Delia was quite peaceful about it all, and talked about the value of real opinion

sincerely held and so forth. I am going down there for the week-end.

Yours,

J. R. HARRISON.

P.S.—Would you mind *not* telling Henry?

Friday, 19th October.

We need a law enacting that the Beethoven Violin Concerto shall never be begun until for five seconds there has been complete and total silence. Never yet have I heard properly the four beats on the drum. Even with this good audience they rise from the middle of a subsiding rustle and hum, instead of falling, as they should do, into a soundless void. So all I can say is that the beginning of the Concerto must be very wonderful, when you hear it.

And after that, out of all whooping! The Concerto has all the different early Beethovens, each of them at his best. The first theme is sworn brother to the two great heroic themes in E flat—the first themes of the Third Symphony and Fifth Concerto: it is strong and forcible and courageous, and sustains without an atom of weakening the marvellous embroideries which the violin loads upon it. The second theme is like Mozart—particularly the G Minor Sym-

phony, about which I must not say more for fear of digression—in its suggestiveness, its hint of further beauties beyond what we hear ; it is winged for flight into the purer æther. And finally in the third movement we have Beethoven the humorist at his very best : it is comedy, and young comedy at its keenest and most joyous, the spirit which peoples the forest of Arden and the wood near Athens with the blithe creatures of poetry. The 'cellos and basses, striving after fragments of the theme, are as good as Bully Bottom, and have the same sudden reaches of imagination as that intermittently inspired weaver.

To pass from this to the Choral Symphony, as we did to-night, is tragic. The Concerto is the work of a young man in the first full vigour of his inspiration : the Symphony is the work of an old man staggering under the burden of unbearable suffering. More than this, the burden had weakened him. The Choral Symphony is full of extraordinary things : even in the mutilated version without the ending we have still the Coda of the first movement, the drums of the Scherzo, and the second theme of the Adagio. But the impetus is fitful : there are passages that drag ; there are lumps of clay that the fire has hardly touched. One feels that Beethoven's

musical inspiration is flagging, and is unequal to the demands of his imagination : the two things are distinct, and not fused in a single impulse. It is as if he said to himself at the beginning, 'Here I must have something tremendous,' and that for once it would not come at his call. What came was a big theme, but not big enough for the gigantic framework he had prepared.

Possibly it is unfair to judge the symphony at all just after hearing the mutilated version. Certainly when one hears it complete it makes an extraordinary difference : the mere sight of the chorus behind keeps the first three movements on the tip-toe of expectation. But even so I should say this is only the last and most sensational of the many sensations of this symphony. It is sensational to leave your tonality ambiguous by omitting the third in the notes of your chord : it is sensational to invert your Scherzo and Adagio, to tune your drums in octaves, and give them a solo bar after a dead silence ; it is sensational to have two tunes in different keys, times, and rhythms in your slow movement : it is most sensational of all to review and dismiss all your themes in the last movement, and then to introduce voices. This would all matter little if the music came first and brought

the sensations, so to speak, with it. But if the music is flagging, the sensations become merely tricks and trappings : they are the gesticulations of an orator no longer completely gripped by his subject. I feel at times an unregenerate impulse to write at the head of my score, as a title to the whole symphony, the words ' For this occasion only.'

So when any one talks of the topmost flights of Beethoven, I shall continue to think of the Seventh rather than the Ninth Symphony. There is the complete and final music : there is all humanity made manifest on the orchestra. The ordinary reply is that the Seventh is merely secular, while the Ninth is religious ; to which I answer, in all reverence, so much the worse for religion. There is a kind of mystical feeling occasionally perceptible in the Ninth : but it is the mysticism of a man who is beginning to shut his eyes. In the Seventh his eyes were open to the whole world. If the Ninth is true religion, some of us are off to die with Odin.

Saturday, 20th October.

DEAR NIGEL,

If, as Mr. Kennedy says to his son in Dean Farrar's exquisite romance of Cambridge life,

I tell you that it has cost me a strong effort to write the word 'Dear,' you will realise how low you have sunk in my estimation. Here was I just going off to pay my bob and wallow in Gounod's 'Nazareth,' when your ticket arrives, with the usual consequences of a narrative. As a lineal descendant of John Knox (or was it Drummond of Hawthornden?) I am bound to save elevenpence where I can (viz., one shilling less one penny stamp). But this is positively the last occasion.

'Nazareth' is very beautiful, but has not the passion of *The Chocolate Soldier*, and is rather slow to waltz to. Also the room was rather crowded, the floor unpolished, and one had to pay for the ices.

The rest of the programme was difficult. When I go to a Saturday night, I expect to hear nice tunes with none of your beastly intellectualism. Instead of which I get Bach (Aria on the G String), Beethoven (Leonora No. 2), Wagner (Lohengrin's narration), and so forth. What is the good of this sort of thing? It gives me a good conceit of my own enlightenment, but do I really enjoy it? Curse your intellect: give us tunes—real jolly tunes written by Englishmen for Englishmen; not discords written

by superior Germans for the pallid votaries of (so-called) culture.

It is really a serious matter. No doubt the Promenade audience has been captured now, and persuaded that it likes classical music. But audiences do not live for ever, and when this one is grown old and dead, where are your recruits? Are you laying yourself out, with plenty of Sullivan, to inveigle the new generation into your net?—to get it to Saturdays first, and then to Thursdays, and then to Wednesdays, and then to Tuesdays, Fridays, and Mondays (in whatever order you put them), so that the raw tiro from the music-hall eventually becomes the devotee of the whole-tone scale?

I suppose the answer is that no blandishments are necessary: that children get such an elevated musical education nowadays, that a very short course of L.C.C. bands (which are becoming confoundedly classical) initiates them into the inner mysteries of the Promenades, and they take their Debussy like ham-and-eggs for breakfast. But in this case what is to become of the hack-composers, and of the *Ancient and Modern Hymns*? And above all, how can any of us feel really select and exclusive in our music any longer? The beast with many heads butts

into the pastures we thought were for us alone : our only refuge is to revert to vulgarity, and there, unfortunately, we find most of our friends.

It is a sad state of things, and personally I am going to abandon concerts, and try to discover some pursuit in which I can still be really select. I do not know what it will be, but I have a strong suspicion that it will not be musical criticism.

Mr. J. R. Harrison had kindly invited me to dine with him this night, and had done everything possible to make the evening a success except providing any dinner, being present himself, or leaving any message. Ich grolle nicht.

HENRY.

Monday, 22nd October.

MY DEAR NIGEL,

Many thanks for the ticket. We enjoyed it very much, and are most grateful. Gilbert is getting quite keen about music : without knowing much about it, he has a real natural taste for it. He liked the Preislied particularly. There was lots more from the *Meistersinger*, and we do want to see it so !

We both got a little bit tired towards the end, and didn't attend very carefully. Do you know the kind of state of half-hearing you get into,

while you are really thinking rather vaguely about other things? It's not so easy with Wagner as with other things: if the key changes suddenly or you have a violent *ff* or *pp* it wakes you up: but we managed it somehow to-night, and also (I am sorry to say) with the Brahms on Friday. This is shocking ingratitude to the Ticket: but as a matter of fact it is rather pleasant to let yourself go flop and leave the music to come at you if it likes, so to speak.

Please forgive me for not writing more, but times are busy and we had aunts last night and have cousins (at Fulham) to-morrow: and next week Uncle Joe will be up.

I have enjoyed the concerts most awfully this year, and must really thank you for letting me have the Ticket so often. Next year when we are settled we must do some more and go to the cake-shop afterwards for Auld Lang Syne. The waiter asked after you to-night!

Fluffy was at the Concert to-night just behind us, but I hardly saw her, as she went before the end, leaving behind her an umbrella and two scores. It was rather lucky, as we were able to recover them.

Your aff^te. cousin,

RHODA G. R. CLARKE.

Tuesday, 23rd October.

'Tod und Verklärung' is truly terrific. It is (probably) full of astounding technical ingenuities, and is also a most daring experiment in realism : but after hearing it one cannot attend to matters like this. The thing itself is so overwhelming. The shuddering, menacing, uneasy quiet of the beginning : the tremendous conflict working up and up, beaten back each time by the blare of the trombones a semitone above ; the climax with the uneven beat getting slower and slower—horribly suggestive of a heart running down ; all this is of the first order of creation, which confounds the categories of criticism. If your principles will not allow this to be music, very good : it is then something else—not music—very wonderful and very interesting, performed by an orchestra with instruments and written down in a score.

Personally I am less interested in the Verklärung than in the Tod. The transfiguration theme is a fine one, but—saving the composer's presence—it is not in the same street with the death-struggle. I am afraid I always find this with death music ; the *but* clause is not so good as the plain obituary statement. It is so with Handel ; with the beautiful soup which

Chopin ladles out in the major key : with the oboe in the ' Eroica ' ; and even with the similar theme in the slow movement of the Seventh. The *but* clause is always in the optative mood, and tries to pretend it is in the future indicative.

Elgar's ' Cockaigne ' overture was a considerable contrast, but I was glad to hear it again, and am confirmed in my love for it. The little theme at the beginning is most suggestive, and has a complete lack of finality, which shows that it is destined to blossom and sprout into other things, as a good theme in a tone-poem should do. I have not seen a score, but I am sure that this theme at least has not got *Nobilmente* written over it.

Wednesday, 24th October.

It is said that when Brahms wrote his Fourth Symphony in 1885, the more devoted Brahmins called the attention of the world to his originality in writing it in the key of E Minor. Whether he was really original in this I do not know : musical critics will say anything. But however that may be, he was not destined to rule for long alone in the domain of E Minor. Three years later Tschaikowsky invaded his realm with songs of archangels and terrors of the damned ; and

in the early nineties Dvořàk followed with the symphony which Henry calls 'Poor Old Joe,' otherwise the Fifth, 'From the New World.' Having just heard it I wish to dissociate myself emphatically from Henry's irreverence. It is really a very charming work, and the negro-song element in it amounts to little more than a touch of colouring.

The things which especially abide with me are the main theme of the first movement, which reappears in the finale—or at least sends its brother to represent it—and the whole of the slow movement. The first theme is a triumph of rhythm—cheery and cocky and decidedly popular in tone, but with life enough to animate the whole movement and make it dance to the measure. It passes into a mood of refined delicacy at times, notably when sung by the flutes in its full-length version : on the other hand, it has glorious moments of pandemonium on the trombones. But, on the whole, it is innocent fun, and no hearts are broken.

The chords which usher in the Largo are so beautiful and mysterious that I live in hopes of being able to pick them out for myself on the piano ; but as they are in D flat, and involve four transposing instruments, the hope is somewhat remote. Anyhow, they form a magical

introduction to the beautiful song of the *cor anglais*. It is a simple little tune, and, at first sight, seems to deserve the implication of 'Poor Old Joe'; but it stands fire and remains with you, as 'Poor Old Joe' does not. The triplet-agitations of the flute which follow are also most charming, and there is a fine grave tune for the strings underneath. Then once more the *cor anglais* and the magic chords and we are done.

We also had the Brahms' Piano Concerto in D Minor. I like the first statement of the second theme in the first movement.

To change the subject, it is always pleasant to hear the *Nozze di Figaro* overture, which is the work of a wit and a poet and a musician. The main tune which emerges from the scurrying of the fiddles is at the fountain-head of all humorous music. Mozart and Beethoven are distinguished from most other musicians, at any rate, in this—that they really knew how to be funny. The *Figaro* overture is as good as the Eighth Symphony. Other musicians were mostly dreary fellows by comparison, without a spark of fun.

Thursday, 25th October.

DEAR NIGEL,—Topping concert, thanks : and I'm sorry it's the last. The things were mostly short, and came from all over the shop, viz. :

(*a*) *German*—Brahms' 'Hungarian Dances'—very exciting, with the orchestra whacking her up and letting her go alternately; (*b*) *Finnish*—'En Saga,' by Sibelius, which I didn't care much about, and also Järnefelt's 'Præludium,' which is a pretty thing; (*c*) *Italian*—Prologue to *Pagliacci*, which I think I wrote about before; (*d*) *Russian*—a thing by Moussorgsky, which I couldn't make head or tail of; (*e*) *English*—'Pomp and Circumstance,' by Elgar, which I have heard before and like; (*f*) *not classified* (because I don't know where he came from), a perfectly ripping piece of Ballet Music from Gluck's *Orfeo*. He sounds German, but *it* (I mean the name) looks Italian. Anyhow, it was top-hole.

I am rather busy, and haven't time to write more, except that I am very much obliged to you for letting me have the Ticket so often. It has been good fun, and I had no idea when I started how interesting this sort of thing was.

By the way, I'm afraid I've lost that book you lent me; I can't find it, and must have sent it by mistake to my people's Jumble Sale. Very sorry; I'll get you another if you remind me.

Yours ever,

J. R. HARRISON.

Friday, 26th October.

I have been listening to the Fifth Concerto, and am going to say exactly what I think. If you dislike rhapsody omit the next few pages.

The introduction is a sublime piece of comic dialogue. 'Ho!' says the orchestra, on a magnificent chord. 'Yes,' replies the piano, ranging over four and a half octaves, 'but I am also a man of my hands: kindly listen to this little hint of what we are going to do.' 'Ha!' says the orchestra, on a still more magnificent chord. 'Try once more,' replies the piano, ranging over five octaves and a third; 'listen carefully, and I will make my hint a little plainer.' 'Hoo!' says the orchestra, now thoroughly roused. 'I will just do a trifle more to make it quite clear that I am master,' says the piano; 'listen carefully; are you ready?' 'Yes,' answer the strings, pizzicato. 'Go!' says the piano, and they are off.

The main theme of the first movement is purely classic—firm and finely tempered as a line of the *Æneid*. Indeed, it always awakes in me the memories of ancient republics; it is valour, virtus, ἀρετή, made audible — the spirit which animated the great fighting and governing nations. If you want its analogue

in literature you must look for it in the epitaph of Simonides on the dead at Thermopylæ, or the equally splendid words of Thucydides about the burial of the dead at Marathon. The title 'Emperor' applied to this Concerto is generally deemed a vulgarism; but if you think back to the origin of the word it is not unfitting. You can see the Roman legions, after some incredible feat of organised courage and endurance, hailing their leader with uplifted swords to the shout 'Imperator.'

The second theme covers nine bars and uses only five notes. Played with one finger on the piano, it might be thought dull; sung by two horns above the soft heavings of the strings, punctuated by sharp taps on the drum, it suggests everything—the calm that ends all human efforts and the mystery that lies behind them. It is a pure orchestral conception: Beethoven felt this tune through the horns as he felt the ground through his feet, and what you play on the piano is (to put it shortly) something else.

The theme of the slow movement is beautiful, but something of a relaxation—as often happened in Beethoven's slow movements. No doubt, with the third movement coming, he had to lower the temperature. But it serves as the

foundation for astonishing feats by the piano—strenuous and supple and cleanly cut, now meditative, now plaintive, now spirited. The theme is always in the background, but the piano has the front of the stage—which is only another way of saying that it *is* a Concerto.

There follows the most electrifying moment of the whole work—the famous semitone drop. The piano—*morendo*—delivers its final benediction to the theme, and for a bar the bassoons hold the key-note of B. On the next beat they drop to B flat, and at once the whole mood changes. The piano outlines very softly a first sketch of the final theme, pauses for an instant, jumps on to the note of B flat, like a diver on a spring-board, and soars away into the air up the chord of E flat. The strings hurl away their mutes, dance softly down to G by way of a trial trip, and then charge off in pursuit.

It is the wildest and liveliest of all games. The piano tries to introduce a mild sedative in the form of the second theme, but the strings keep flustering it so that it trips up over its first notes in the most undecorous fashion—and in a passage marked *dolce*, too. Gradually the most respectable instruments in the orchestra become demoralised, and take a leading part

in the revel. The horn—that dignified and romantic singer of other-worldly cantabiles—by letting fall a remark in E flat at the least appropriate moment diverts the piano into a new key which it adopts with enthusiasm. The bassoon—the churchwarden of the wood-wind—promptly does the same thing on a yet more impossible note, with the result that the piano jumps into E and remains there, with the pained and surprised signature of E flat staring it in the face. The whole orchestra then begins to play Musical Chairs, and stops suddenly in order to leave the bassoon alone with a silly little bar, quite overcome with confusion at hearing its own voice.

But at the end of the joke comes something different. The drum, which has been acting as general attendant on the revels, suddenly takes the stage, and begins beating the rhythm on a monotone with the piano accompanying first in runs and then in chords, getting always slower and softer. It is the old, characteristic shift of Beethoven's mood, the touch of the transcendental: you know it by the sudden arresting of attention, the quickening of your pulses, the indefinable suggestion that all which has gone before is really external, irrelevant. As usual, the veil is lifted only for a moment;

it drops, and we conclude loudly and cheerfully with crashes on the chord of E flat.

This, of course, is only a dull and literal sketch of the main lines of the Concerto : there is endless beauty in detail—particularly the skirmishings of the piano round the theme in the first movement, and the little broken phrases hinting at the return of the theme in the Rondo. But, after all, it is a real organic structure, and one has to go first for the main themes, clean and strong and visible as the branches of a beech-tree through all the bravery of spring. Grant me these, and I will discourse endlessly about the details. But perhaps it is better to pass on, since after this gigantic work we still have the C Minor ahead of us.

It is becoming customary to end the last Friday Part I with the C Minor, and though exquisites may fret it is a good custom. The C Minor at any rate welds all Promenaders in a single mass : the novice is enraptured, the licentiate confirmed in his allegiance, while the most experienced can at least recall, whether with contempt or regret, the emotions of his orchestral nonage. Some of us, my dear brother Promenaders, are hearing this symphony for the first time : some for the fourth : one at

least for the twenty-third. What matter? Are we not all one body? After all, there are some people who have never heard it at all, including the musical critic of a paper whom I once met.

But having previously scattered ink over the C Minor, I need only note here that the Theory has revived again. It relates to the first movement. Ordinarily we are told that there are two themes; the first, forcible and passionate (Beethoven): the second, gentle and plaintively protesting (Theresa): and much pretty and tender writing has resulted from this idea. If this be so, I have a series of questions to ask.

First, why does Theresa start with a gigantic bellow on the horns, consisting of three quavers marked *fortissimo* and three minims marked *sforzando*? Is this the 'womanly, yielding, devoted girl' of Grove? If you say that the horns are *not* Theresa, and that she does not begin till the violins, I come on to my second question.

Second, if the violins *are* Theresa, why does she have absolutely no show in the working out? I know that second themes do get crowded out sometimes, but if Beethoven was in such a state about Theresa, why did he make no mention of her in the most exciting part of the movement? On the other hand, he *does* use the horn-bellow: it is clearly the foundation of those tremendous

passages in minims, which overmaster the first theme for a while, until they sink away in exhaustion.

Third, what really happens in the Coda? There is a long passage in crotchets, which Grove calls a new theme; to me it is always the most terrible thing in the whole symphony. It sinks down as though with a desperate gesture of wringing the hands, rises again to a poignant climax of agony, and dies away again, while the relentless drum-tap breaks in, final and decisive, like the fall of earth on a coffin lid. It is the one moment in the symphony at which grief becomes morbid. Now, this passage, this 'new theme,' has precisely the rhythm, and often the intervals, of the violin part of the second theme—in other words, of Theresa! So that having been excluded from the working out, she comes back with a vengeance in the Coda.

Now for the Theory. There are *three* themes, or elements, or whatever you like to call them—the first agitated and relentless, the second (the horn-bellow) violent and aggressive, the third (Theresa) gentle and plaintive. The first and second have their death-grapple in the working out: the third reappears, according to practice, in the recapitulation, but is otherwise reserved for the more searching tortures of the Coda.

And if you like to identify this third with Theresa, I don't mind : there are parallels elsewhere to the suggestion conveyed. In the Coda, the theme which softened and tranquillised the earlier struggle is become itself the source of the keenest torment : the thought of Theresa turns upon Beethoven, and rends him : the veil is stripped from his love, leaving only horror and disgust. 'Get thee to a nunnery ; why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners ? I am myself indifferent honest ; but yet, I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me.'

Season Tickets are not valid for the last Saturday night, and so this ends the series. I tried to get up a final revel at the cake-shop : but the only people I could find were Harrison and Flavia, who seemed to regard cakes as something quite beneath their notice, and went off haughtily to the Tube. So I walked home alone.

It has been a good time. My main regret is that I missed the 'Eroica,' but it will be coming on soon at a Sunday concert. I also must hear the Sixth again if I can. I wish we could have had the big Schubert in C, but after all one cannot expect everything.

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KW-741-638